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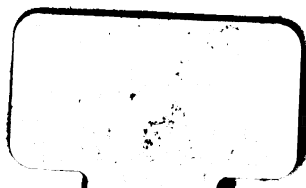


CHARLES A. MACEADLANE

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ANTON HARCOURT.





As the news spread, consternation, amazement, profanity increased

The Boston
is the Boston
of Boston
the Boston
the Boston

LETTIA

*A THRILLING NOVEL OF
BOSTON LIFE*

BY
CHARLES A. MANNING



THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON, MASS.

NEW YORK

LETITIA

*A THRILLING NOVEL OF
WESTERN LIFE*

By
CHARLES A. MACFARLANE



THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
1908

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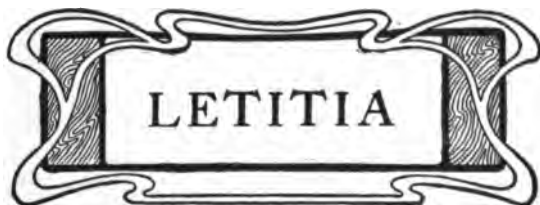
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CHAPTER I

A POLITICAL UPHEAVAL

THE Free Press Publishing House was in a state of intense excitement. The streets of Burlington resembled in miniature a Wall Street panic. Nothing equal to it had been experienced since the establishment of the well-behaved little city. And because of its staid, peace-loving nature, the shock was all the more noticeable.

Bedlam had broken loose shortly after the morning edition of the *Daily Free Press* was put on sale. Supply after supply was exhausted, only to meet with a still greater demand from the striving multitudes. Newsboys were racing hither and thither in answer to numberless calls. Here little knots of jubilant readers, there cursing individuals, who were evidently interested in a sense which was not at all to their credit.

Some one had let the cat loose, and it had entered the enemy's camp. The information had surely emanated from an inner source—from some one familiar with the machine's workings. But who could it be? Several were heard to declare that they

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would unearth the traitor if it cost five hundred dollars; others placed their offers at an even ten. But each theory was at sea. Every member of the exposed organization was equally desirous of laying violent hands upon the culprit. As the news spread, consternation, amazement, profanity, increased.

The sensation was created by a whirlwind article in which a plot was laid bare to steal the state by bribery and ballot trickery, with the purpose of ousting the present officials, who with two or three exceptions were up for re-election. Appearing just a week before election day, its influence could not but react in favor of the administration, as thousands of copies were at that moment speeding to every section of the state.

The very spot where the scheme was concocted, the night, the hour, were given, including the names of prominent political wire-pullers and office-seekers, conspicuous in a promoting sense. Even sums paid in by men of wealth, several of local residence, were chronicled, and sufficient evidence published to thwart the attempt by a systematic battle of the opposing party.

At an hour earlier than was his custom, Managing Editor Bennett rushed into the city editor's sanctum, his hair almost standing upon end with suppressed excitement.

"Bowditch, who wrote up that hurricane on the plot to steal the state?"

"Grant, I suppose, although I haven't seen him

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for a week. Reed told me he landed here about eleven o'clock last night, went into the composing-room and rushed the article through, paying the boys for overtime, besides giving them a chicken supper. Grant is on the soft side of the compositors, and they will do anything he asks them."

"But how did he get into the hall?"

"I don't know."

"Was he disguised?"

"I don't know that either. I simply know that Alex is capable of getting whatever he goes after and in this case he succeeded wonderfully well," with which remark Bowditch whirled about to his desk and proceeded to finish a half-written local.

"When Grant comes in I want him," and Editor Bennett disappeared within his den, where he was soon lost to all surroundings in the construction of an editorial upon political jugglery and official dishonesty.

An attempt was made to pump the reportorial staff, but was without success. Bennett was approached, but refused to discuss the matter. Bowditch looked five hundred dollars in the face and refused to talk.

Grant, though sought after, could not be found. He was not seen at his desk for two days, when he suddenly appeared, as serene as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"Alex, the chief wants you," shouted Bowditch, catching sight of the young man.

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"What's up now?"

"Going to fire you, I guess, for taking this most respectable town by the heels. Say, Grant, how did you land that scoop? Can't you tell a fellow?"

"The fact that I was upon the spot at the right time must satisfy you for the present, Cyrus. You divulge too easily to be trusted with a secret, and in this particular case a word at the wrong time might cause at least one man unlimited trouble. The fact is, Cyrus, you have been peddling my brilliant achievements so freely of late that I am tired of hearing my exploits rehearsed. I appreciate your compliments to my friends, but I'd rather you would credit some of my productions to your own brilliancy than make me so conspicuous. The chief will be giving me your berth if you don't stop it, and then you will have to go hungry. But I won't take it, Cyrus; you may trust me for that. Your wife and baby shall never accuse me of driving you to a suicidal grave through my appropriating their food supply. If you would only die a natural death, and stay dead, I would gladly step into your shoes, for my ambition is to climb atop the journalistic ladder; but as long as you are on earth, Cyrus, you can occupy the top rung. Any old place is satisfactory to me—so long as I am granted the privilege of shoving a pencil."

"Thanks, awfully, kid. I shall sleep better, now that you have assured me of your loyalty."



A broad grin spread over the manager's face as his subordinate took a seat near the desk

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"Grant, I want you."

The order came from the inner room short and quick.

"You are in for it now, sonny," chirped Bowditch by way of revenge. "When he is through feasting on your carcass I'll gather up your bones and bury them with decency."

Without deigning to answer, the young reporter entered the chief's private quarters, closing the door after him. A broad grin spread over the manager's face as his subordinate took a seat near the desk. He was evidently in the best of humor.

"Great article, Grant. The slickest thing this old sheet has contained in many a day. You have saved the state for us without a doubt, and I will see that you lose nothing by it. Politics have been running too close for comfort these past two or three years, and your exposure explains the cause. But how did you get hold of it? None of us have thought of such an organization being in existence."

"I received a tip from Governor Smith last week while at Montpelier reporting the Poor Farm investigation. He asked me to follow up a certain clue and report to him. I secured considerable information at Rutland, and more at Bellows Falls. I have been on the tramp day and night for a week, following the trail from place to place, and when the final meeting convened in this city night before last, I was in hearing and seeing distance ready to take down the proceedings.

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Delegates from every section of the state were present, prepared to contribute or receive bribe money, and I was rather surprised at the liberality of certain professed local reformers. As a whole, the organization is perfect."

"Or was, before you smashed it. Where were you located?"

"Overhead, in a floorless attic, with holes bored through the plaster."

"How could you see to take notes?"

"Dark lantern. I lay on my stomach for three hours, not daring to move. But there was interest in abundance, and plenty of work to keep me awake. I had a fine view of all present."

"But how did you get up there?"

Grant hesitated.

"Will you promise not to tell?"

"I promise."

"I bribed the janitor and he hoisted me up through a trap an hour before the gathering. It was a special favor, and if he had not been friendly toward me I could not have succeeded in my undertaking."

"It must have been a terrible place for you to take notes."

"I was after news, and there was no other place available within hearing distance. You should have seen me when I dropped to the floor. I was one mass of dirt and cobwebs. This house will have to donate

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a new suit for the one I ruined."

Bennett howled with laughter. "Grant, I would advise you to leave the newspaper profession and hire to Pinkerton as an experienced detective. You would make a brilliant success. I'll back you with a recommendation a yard long."

"Which would kill me stone dead."

"I wish to say, Grant, that I appreciate this effort you have made in behalf of the party. I have been watching your progress for the past three years with pleasure; but this stroke surpasses all previous assignments. You will hereafter be reserved for political and editorial work at an increased salary, with a desk in the city editor's room. I congratulate you upon your success, my boy, and in the future shall expect still greater things of you."

Editor Bennett had no favorites. Each man must rise on individual merits. No other qualities were recognized, and that his eyes had not been shut to young Grant's struggles was evident from his present remark. He admired true courage, and the promotion to a desk was a reward desired above all else by the staff writers of the *Free Press*.

It was not to be wondered that the ambitious heart beat with gratitude as, thanking his superior for the honor conferred, Grant rose and left the room. He was one point nearer the zenith of his journalistic career; one more promotion would place him next to

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the chief himself, short of which position he would not stop.

It had been three years of rugged work, covering the hardest districts of the city—districts which not a few predecessors had given up in despair, but conquered by the indomitable will of the plucky fellow, whose determination to win his way up recognized no failure. Now he could look back upon his experiences with a sense of satisfaction, knowing that merit alone had brought the long desired promotion. In the future his articles would have a weightier bearing upon the public, giving him greater opportunity for the exhibition of a talent which none had recognized more quickly than the chief himself.

"It has come, Cyrus," he said, upon entering the city editor's department.

"I expected it. Going to pack up now?" But the twinkling eyes anticipated Grant's answer.

"I have been promoted to the political department at an increased salary, with a desk in this room. The chief is my authority, sir."

"Put it right there, my boy," said Bowditch, rising and extending his hand. "You have earned it a hundred times over, and I told Bennett so several weeks ago. I'm glad you are on the way up, Grant. You will make good, or my name is not Cyrus Bowditch."

"I shall try hard to fill out all the corners, anyway,"

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was the humorous reply. "I have served a thorough apprenticeship, and am familiar with political ropes."

"If nine-tenths of the older heads were as quick to detect tricks as you are, things would be easier with us at the elections. As it is, whatever majority we may have this year will be placed to your credit. But don't let the promotion swell your head, or the chief may have to use the lance, my boy. Just keep on the level, with eyes and ears open for pointers, and you will not only win out, but climb another peg before you are two years older. Keep in touch with the chief, and you won't go far astray. What he doesn't know about wire-pulling is not worth mentioning."

"Thanks for the advice, Cyrus. I'll bear it in mind. While I have no ambition to follow in the wake of others, experts in their profession though they be, I will watch Bennett for points, and act accordingly. Originality is the key to success, and that course I shall pursue."

"And you have commenced by stirring up the tarnalest racket this old town has ever known," laughed the city editor, turning again to his desk. "It took all the grace I possessed to keep from letting the cat jump when Ed McCormick shook five hundred dollars in my face. But a friend is a friend, Grant, and you can always count on old Cyrus when it comes to a pinch."

For answer the young man approached his companion and extended his hand. "Cyrus, you have been

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a friend to me during the past three years, while I was struggling against odds. I thank you for your assistance and encouragement. In the future call on me for anything I can do, and I am at your service." Then turning quickly, for his heart was filled with emotion, he left the room and building, turning in the direction of Champlain Avenue, where dwelt his parents and sister.

CHAPTER II

BROKEN WITH GRIEF

LOCKED in his private office, absent to all callers, Robert Grant, millionaire-lumberman and financier, had for hours continued in deepest thought, oblivious to the passing of time and forgetful of the appointments that were to add still more wealth to his already well-filled coffers. The grey head was bowed, and deep furrows showed plainly in the shrewd, handsome face. He ran his fingers nervously through his thick hair, dishevelled more and more his usually fastidiously neat appearance. The mind overcharged further showed plainly in the agitated movements of his hands and feet.

His meditations were of a personal nature: his heart was the battle-ground of a terrible conflict between conscience and will; the most stubborn contest he had struggled against in all of his fifty-one years of life. One moment was conscience in the supremacy: then the indomitable will-power of the man would summons its forces and beat back the gentler mastery. His problem was difficult of solution; his future course complicated. As in many a like session with self, during the past two years, duty faced him like a thick,

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dark cloud to be beaten back at a fearful cost to his personal pride and past unswerving record, or accepted at the expense of all future happiness. The final decision meant much to this man of wealth and undisputed influence. On the one hand was his iron system, his financial standing, at bay, and on the other hand, facing his unbending dignity was the lost companionship of his only son and heir—the pride of his matured life and the one being upon earth whom he truly loved since the beautiful wife and mother had died. Stern, tyrannical, had been his method of dealing with those in his employ and had been followed out upon his own boy. Sitting in his office alone, this financial king, who never before had felt the sting of defeat, searched thoroughly his heart now, determined to decide, once and for all, the stand he should take in regard to this missing son. His boy—banished by the father who would rather lose his companionship than forego the ultimatum of one of his pet theories! With a peculiar show of energy which was part of his exacting nature, the financier sprang to his feet with an exclamation. “I will do it! I can stand this suspense no longer. John shall be found and returned to me, if it costs me half, yes, all of my fortune. I was at fault; I alone was to blame; my boy was right. May God forgive me for driving him from his home by helping me find him. Alex will be just the one to search for him. I will back him with money and his

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ingenuity will do the rest. Besides it will do Brother John's son good to get away from that desk for a time—polish his natural quickness a bit—though heaven knows he is bright enough as he is. He must resign his position at once and be ready to start out for me by the first of next week."

Then rubbing his hands together in high glee as the great burden rolled from his heart, Mr. Grant went to the telephone, rang up the *Free Press* and requested his nephew's presence at the office without delay. Fifteen minutes later a handsome young man of about twenty-four, athletic in build and quick of step, entered the private office of the influential lumberman.

"How soon can you arrange for a trip, Alex?" began the uncle abruptly.

"Within a week, sir," replied the young man as tersely.

"Good. Now I want you, sir, to resign your position on the paper immediately and be ready to leave here Monday morning on an extended business trip. Understand?"

"Where am I going?"

"In search of your cousin John."

The young man studied his uncle carefully for a moment: no words were necessary to tell him the agony of mind his uncle was in, for the feverish haste of the man told its story plainly. While pleased with

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his relative's apparent triumphant decision, Alex was in no haste to jump at the proposition, which, aside from entailing a wearisome journey attended with hidden dangers, required him to drop immediately the journalistic position which he had struggled so hard to win. He knew he must strike out for the big lumber districts in the North. The young newspaper man was never in harmony with his uncle's avaricious policies, nor did he agree with him in the decision which had resulted in the sudden disappearance of his cousin. Yet he had long felt that the day would come when the son would be sought for, and he was glad that time was here. But if he was the one to be chosen to find John's hiding-place, he resolved that the father should pay liberally for his service.

"How much money is there in your proposition, sir?" he asked suddenly.

"I will back you financially, Alex."

"Backing is all very good, so far as it goes, but I must decline to throw up a promising position, Uncle Robert, unless there is something more lucrative in view. According to your own principle, business is business. Now, how much is it worth to run Cousin John down to earth, bring him home and deliver him over to you?"

"Fifty thousand dollars, sir," with an amused twinkle at the nephew's mercenary turn of mind, which seemed totally out of keeping with his usual free-heartedness.

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"And how much will I receive even if I cannot find him?"

"Fifty thousand dollars just the same, for I know you will make a thorough search of the country."

"What will you put to my credit, over that amount, for my expenses?"

"Ten thousand dollars. I will also give you one thousand in cash, which makes eleven thousand, and you may draw on me for ten thousand more, if necessary."

"And the time limit is——?"

"Two years."

"Make it fifty thousand whether I succeed or fail, and one hundred thousand if I stand him before you within two years, and I will undertake to locate John Grant."

The millionaire's lips set firmly. "You are placing a high value upon your services, young man. I have no money to squander."

"Nor have I time to squander, Uncle Robert. I realize to some extent the magnitude of this search. The territory I shall be compelled to cover, and the dangers accompanying an entrance into the northern lumber woods make it a most undesirable mission."

"But I cannot afford to pay out such a sum, Alex. One hundred thousand dollars is a large fortune. I thought surely a young man of your limited means would be well satisfied with my offer."

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"I admit to being poor, Uncle Robert. I am also ambitious." Then the blue eyes flashed. "If cousin's companionship is worth anything to you, it is worth the sum I have named. You drove him from home: now, if you wish me to find him, you must give me my price. Otherwise further words between us are useless."

Instantly Mr. Grant melted. He was fully persuaded that no one so well qualified could be found to take up the search—no one would be as faithful or thorough as Alex. Nor was he averse to placing this favorite nephew in financial ease.

"Your terms are accepted," he said finally. "From the hour you find my boy, and telegraph me he is willing to return to his father, you will be worth one hundred thousand dollars in hard cash, together with any balance that may remain from the allotment for expenses."

"Very well. Now as to stipulations, or mode of search."

"I will leave that entirely in your hands. I can trust you. I have been watching your progress for the past three years. A young man who will work so faithfully for promotion will put an equal amount of energy into the search for a chum. I have intended to put you on your feet, Alex, but you know my principles. I would rather you earned the money than take it as a gift. You will appreciate it more. Again, it

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will do you good to get acquainted with the outside workings of the world. But above all return John to me, if you wish to earn my life-long gratitude."

There were tears in Robert Grant's eyes as he looked almost pleadingly into his nephew's face. His voice trembled, his hands clasped nervously, then, bowing his head, he gave way to a grief long pent up. The hard heart had softened, the flood-gates had opened; the stern, discipline-loving father, the mettlesome employer, had at last acknowledged defeat.

Two years previous, his only son and heir, a capable young man of twenty-two, had suddenly severed all connection with the firm and left for regions unknown. A loss of two thousand dollars to the business, accredited to his carelessness, had caused the father to attempt a recovery by retaining half the young man's salary until the amount was made good. So exacting was the elder man in matters of business that each office clerk holding accounts was responsible for their collection, and as this particular claim had been placed in the son's hands with instructions to collect at once, Mr. Grant declined to consider the statement that a failure on the debtor's part rendered payment impossible, although presented without delay. Prompt returns of one hundred cents on the dollar were vigorously enforced; otherwise a portion of the employee's salary must be held back until the firm's demands had been satisfied.

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The young man argued, but Grant, the senior, was firm, with the result that John then and there resigned his position, and with less than two hundred dollars in his pocket, left the city.

For a year Robert Grant's will-power buoyed him up. He was sure John would be heard from or return. But no word had been received. The father's face took on a careworn expression; he became morose. He had counted upon his son's assistance more than he was willing to admit. Another year passed, and the grey hairs had noticeably increased. John was all he had. The strain was becoming greater, the suspense unbearable. He could stand it no longer. Contest after contest with his conscience followed, ending finally in a decision favorable to the son's views, and an appeal to Alex, his brother's only son, whose beautiful mother was his own wife's twin sister, to take up the search.

So close was the resemblance of the cousins in face and form that it seemed to the uncle as though he were conversing with his own boy. The two had grown up together; they had loved each other, and until John's unexpected departure, of which he had not seen fit to acquaint his cousin, there had been no secrets; each was the other's confidant.

The uncle's spirit was contrite, his voice was tender. Not only did he at heart love his son, but the bright nephew also possessed a warm place in his heart.

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Two years must be given to the search, at the end of which time, should the endeavor prove fruitless, Alex would become Robert Grant's principal heir. It had been a rugged lesson to the father, but he had profited to the extent of admitting his error, and was anxious to make amends. Alex was taken fully into his confidence. The experiment was to be kept a secret, only the young man's father, mother and sister entering into the plan.

"John was hot-headed and I was unduly harsh. But he is evidently keeping his word that I will seek him before I see his face again. I am willing to do so to the limit of all I possess. Canvass the country, my boy, and keep me posted as far as possible. I trust to your wisdom in taking advantage of circumstances, and while I would wish you to live well on the way, let nothing come between you and the work in hand. Bring John home to his heart-broken father, and you shall never regret it."

"If he is alive and in the country I will find him," answered Alex. "Next to yourself, I long to see John. We have always been like twins, and I miss him terribly."

"I will talk to your parents to-night. They will agree that a little healthy experience away from home will be of benefit to you. This is a pleasant city to live in, but there are many things to be seen and learned in the outside world. You have fought your way

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well up for a young man; now make a spurt to the top by combating the unseen elements. It is in you to succeed; I like your pluck. You are made of the best Grant material, even to holding your own in a fistic encounter," and he smiled slightly. "Fear nothing but a wrong act. Man is but clay; treat him fairly, but allow of no impositions. Now, go and settle with the *Free Press* people, but say nothing of your purpose in leaving the city."

Three days later Alex Grant was on his journey across the continent in search of the lost heir.

CHAPTER III

"WESTWARD HO"

WESTWARD was headed the San Francisco Limited from Salt Lake City depot. Upon the rear platform, standing with a number of other gentlemen, was Alex Grant, taking a last view of the celebrated Mormon headquarters. His eyes were resting upon a distant steeple when he was startled by the excited cry of a traveller beside him.

"Great Scott! She can never make this train."

"Who?" asked Grant, instantly alert for adventure.

"See. That young lady who boarded at Denver. She has miscalculated her time and is racing for us. Too bad. By——"

A lightning estimate of distance and increase of train speed and Grant's lithe figure shot through the air like a rocket. Bounding to the belated lady's side, he threw an arm firmly around her waist and with a desperate burst of speed ran towards the outgoing express, literally carrying his fair burden with him. For a moment his pace seemed unequal to that of the train, but gathering up his reserve forces, he bounded forward and grasping the iron rail of the rear car, swung aboard amid wild shouts from the

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throng gathered on the platform and the cheers of the passengers gathered at the door and the windows.

Lowering the dazed woman to the platform, he steadied her until she passed within the door, then turned quietly about to take a final look at the rapidly disappearing city.

The gentleman who had drawn his attention to the lady's plight, looked Grant over from head to foot and exclaimed under his breath, "The devil!"

So dexterous had been his movements and so perfect his judgment, that a hum of admiration was heard throughout the car for the daring young man. "It was the prettiest, cleanest jump I have ever seen," said an elderly gentleman in the next car. "That young man deserves a medal. I wonder who he is? I took him for an Easterner, from his dress."

"You're a plucky chap," exclaimed the conductor, pushing his way through the enthusiastic passengers to Grant's side.

"Why didn't you stop the train when you saw her trying to reach us?" asked the young man sharply.

"I didn't see her until you jumped, and then I had only time to gasp twice when you were both again on board. Any more at home like you,—where you come from?"

"The Green Mountains are full of us," was the careless reply, and wishing to escape further notoriety, the young man disappeared, taking a seat in an obscure

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corner of a further car and away from its other occupants. His mind turned immediately to other things, and the incident soon passed out of his mind.

Months had elapsed since leaving his home in quest of John Grant, bringing associations and experiences of a varied nature to him. Thorough though his search had been so far, no trace of the missing cousin had as yet been discovered. It had been a wearisome undertaking, with no hope in view, and times without number young Grant had been tempted to return East: but the abhorrence of failure and the solicitude of an anxious uncle stirred him continuously to renewed effort, until, reaching Chicago eight months from the outset, he decided to cross to the Pacific Coast and from there work backward through the northern lumber regions, feeling assured that John was not to be found in the more available places of business. The change had been most restful; his companions, congenial, and he was enjoying the trip to his heart's content, as it took him through the most beautiful parts of the country. When the incident referred to forced itself upon him, without warning or desire, he found himself the centre attraction for a trainful of appreciative people.

But his mind did not dwell upon the suddenly attained notoriety, or the lady who had been the cause of the situation, but turned to the ever present mission which had called him from a home of comfort and

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love, to brave the deprivations of a lone traveller, with no destination in sight. Though he would have laughed at the idea had any one suggested it, young Grant was growing just a wee bit home-sick. And was it any wonder? With an affectionate mother and sister longing for his return, a father who was more a chum than a parent and his newspaper associates all watching for interesting communications from him, was it a wonder if he should at times sigh for their companionship? How dear the old, dirty editorial rooms looked to him in retrospection! How he pined for a word of encouragement from genial "brother" Bowditch, who had given him many a tip in gathering news and to whom he owed so much for his rapid advancement! Even the sharp voice of Chief Bennett seemed wonderfully sweet to his present mood, even though he smiled grimly at the remembered terse comments made upon unsatisfactory copy, and the rollicking boys in the composing-room, who looked upon him as "the" staff writer of the force, made sadness fairly surge through his heart. These and many other vivid home-pictures raced through his mind, when the dinner-bell ringing called him to attend to a ravenous appetite which had been pricking his meditations, impatient for some time past.

Mechanically he followed his fellow-tourists to the dining-car, slipped into a convenient corner and gave himself over to the interesting experience of satisfying

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the inner man, while listening to the animated chatter of the lively diners about him. Presently, there appeared through the forward door a young woman, quite tall, inclined to slimness, yet of perfect form. Her face was faultless in feature, her carriage stately. The clear complexion, expressive brown eyes and dark-brown hair attracted his attention at once. The simple travelling suit, a model of good taste, and the queenly head, just a little tilted, gave the girl a regal, dignified bearing which was most pleasing to him. As she entered the car, the lovely eyes scanned the company restively, and lighted up as they rested upon the Vermonter and a pleased look of recognition flashed across her face. Several times during the progress of dinner, their eyes met and in them Grant seemed to detect a desire for an interview, which he strenuously determined to avoid.

When dinner was over, the young lady immediately left the car and Alex breathed easier in the hope that the now famous incident would blow over and be left unheard of further. But he had yet to learn of the depth of the young woman's gratitude whom he had so signally favored, for she exhibited a persistency of seeking him out and thanking him, which would have amazed him, had he guessed it. As the rest of the passengers left the dining-car, the train was speeding through the most enchanting scenery and many of them gathered in the observation car to view, without

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obstruction, the ever changing landscape. Exclamations of delight were heard as peak after peak loomed up in the distance, or a matchless stretch of wooded land met their enraptured gaze. Here and there was centered a miniature lake and there rippled away a glistening river. It was all so beautiful, this glorious hand-work of God, that the tourists from one end of the coaches to the other, gathered to gaze spell-bound. For three hours the train sped through the country, with all but the observation car deserted.

Young Grant, who welcomed solitude, under the present conditions of enraptured looks which invariably followed him whenever he mingled with the crowd, occupied a car alone and began immediately to finish an article he was sending home to the *Press*. It was now a week overdue, and forgetful of all but the task before him, he scrawled rapidly over the sheets lying spread out before him on a little table, drawn near the windows. Sheet after sheet was filled in rapid succession; his attention was not distracted by the vanishing scenery or the passing of a passenger through the car. The continual sliding of his pencil was music to his ear, and all other sounds were as if they had not been. Presently a low, sweet voice said close beside him, "May I thank you?"

"Double black headlines, first page, top of sixth and seventh columns. Rush it, Jim, for we are late for the edition." As he spoke, his left hand gathered up

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the completed pages and he held them out toward the figure beside him, his right hand the while putting words together with the speed of an expert. The manuscript was taken from him, but instead of the figure vanishing, which it should have done, according to Grant's reckoning, it dropped into a chair opposite him leisurely.

"I say, Jim, you'll have to rush that through. It's got to be put in type for this issue. Now get a move on, quick!"

"It's horribly written," came a doubtful voice. "I'll have to correct it."

"You put a line to my article and I'll——" Then Grant raised his eyes and met the laughing face of the young woman he had rescued at Salt Lake City. So great was his surprise that for a moment he could not speak, while the young person laughed outright in his face.

"I beg your pardon," he said finally, "but I imagined myself at home, in the old editorial rooms and supposed you were Jim Reed after copy, as usual. Pray forgive me," as he looked half-pleadingly, part-mischievously at his fair intruder.

"I have enjoyed myself immensely watching your intense interest," she answered pleasantly. "I stood some minutes before you spoke, beside you, and noticed your haste, which I take it is characteristic of all newspaper men."

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"I was anxious to finish this article which is over a week late now," he said, as he folded the bulky sheets and placed them in a large white envelope addressed in black type to "The Free Press, Burlington, Vt." "But I believe you asked me a question?"

"I wish to thank you for coming to my assistance at Salt Lake City," she said, feeling peculiarly at ease in the young stranger's presence. "I should surely have been left behind, had you not acted so promptly."

"I was very glad to be of service. I saw your position, and estimated that by a quick movement, you could continue your journey with us. But please accept my apology for handling you so rough. The time was limited and I was forced to cast aside formality for the sake of haste. I trust I am pardoned, under the circumstances?"

"I am the one who should apologize for causing you such trouble and danger," she answered. "My predicament would have been terrible, had you not acted as you did, for my pocket-book, ticket and entire outfit were on the train with my maid. You must permit me to thank you." There was a perceptible tremor in her voice which caused Grant's heart to stir in sympathy.

"I accept your thanks with pleasure," he replied. "But if we are to become acquaintances, and I trust, friends, an introduction is in order. Permit me," and drawing a card from his vest pocket, he handed it

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to her. From it she read slowly, "Alexander Grant, Burlington, Vermont."

"Then you are a real, live Green Mountain boy," she exclaimed enthusiastically. "How glad I am to meet you. I have so often read about dear old Vermont, the first State to be received into the Union after the adoption of the Federal Constitution; of its subsequent struggles and victories under the leadership of Ethan Allen."

"The Allens and Grants were closely connected in those days," replied Grant, seeing his companion was well versed in history. "My great-grandfather and my great-uncle, Ethan Allen, stood side by side in the struggle for right. My mother was Mary Allen, a granddaughter of Ethan Allen's brother."

"And the inherited nobility of character is apparent in the descendant," was the quaint rejoinder. "I have so often heard your ancestors spoken of as possessing sterling qualities. Truly you are preserving their reputation to a marked degree." Then taking from a dainty filigree gold case her card she passed it to him and he read, "Miss Marion Whiting, Montgomery, Alabama."

"Are you travelling far, Miss Whiting?" he asked.

"To San Francisco, where I am to meet my father and brother, who are coming from Seattle. We expect to remain in California a month."

"Then with your permission I will assume guardian-

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ship over you, as I would expect your brother to act in a similar case towards my sister."

The girl flashed a quick glance towards his handsome face, and then apparently satisfied, extended her hand cordially as she said, "I shall be very glad to accept it, Mr. Grant. I am sure we shall grow to be great friends, too."

"True gallantry toward the weaker sex has been so prominent a feature of my early training that to depart from it would be a wide diversion, as well as a lamentable breach of duty," he added earnestly.

"True masculine gallantry is often needed by us," returned Miss Whiting laughingly.

"My experience has dictated otherwise," corrected Grant whimsically. "What women may lack in physical strength is more than made up in their grit, grace and gumption; and we poor men often need to be protected by them."

"Is it possible you will admit that?" she asked, her eyes twinkling merrily.

"Most assuredly. Such was God's estimate of her intelligence, that woman was not formed from man's head to govern, nor from his feet to be trampled upon, but from his rib—and I imagine the one closest to the heart, signifying, to me, Miss Whiting, that woman was meant to be man's equal and that side by side they should advance through life, enjoying equal rights and privileges. Properly mated, man and woman

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are a treasure to each other."

"Why," she said softly, a gracious look illuminating the brown eyes as they looked frankly into his, "isn't that the most beautiful of thoughts. I have never heard anything so beautifully expressed before—or in just that way. You must have a remarkable mother, Mr. Grant."

For answer he took a gold watch from his pocket, touched open the front case and handed it to her.

"Oh what a lovely face!" exclaimed Miss Whiting, looking earnestly at the small picture. "How I could love her! And you resemble her so much!"

His blue eyes sparkled mischievously.

"Now, Mr. Grant, you mustn't take advantage of my enthusiasm," she hastened to protest, blushing prettily. "I was simply honest in my criticism of a beautiful subject. Is your sister in this side?" vainly trying to open the case.

"Yes. Allow me," and with a turn of his pen-knife, the cover opened showing the laughing face of his sprightly sister Ethel.

"A pretty face, speaking of a splendid heart and fine character,—but your sister has a very fearless, wilful nature. When brought under control she will make a loving, noble woman. Am I not right?" was the smiling challenge.

"Quite so; you are thoroughly correct, as we say in Vermont. Ethel is all you say and much more that

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is commendable."

"She is younger than you?"

"Three years. I am nearly twenty-five."

"Which leaves her twenty-two; just a year younger than I. How like brother Fred and myself. He is just three years my senior. We have never been separated until he went away on this trip with Father. He is a dear fellow—and the very essence of honor."

"Does he resemble you?"

"Not at all. He is the image of Father, who is considered a very handsome man. I resemble my mother. She died as the result of an accident two years ago."

"Your mother was a very beautiful, noble-hearted woman, Miss Whiting," said Grant, tenderly.

"Did you know her?" she asked in surprise.

"I judge from the resemblance," and he bowed whimsically.

"Now we are even," she parried, while an appreciative smile dimpled her pretty mouth. "But I see you are crossing the continent in a business capacity, Mr. Grant," she suggested to change the subject.

"Ostensibly as a newspaper correspondent, but in reality a combination. I am serving two masters; not God and Mammon, but a daily newspaper and an uncle. My true mission is to find a cousin who left home two years ago, and has not since been heard from. Therefore the one pays me a regular salary,

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and the other foots all bills, which is quite convenient, I assure you, all things considered. If, in your travels, you meet with a young man who is my counterpart, please box and ship him to Robert Grant, Esq., Burlington, Vermont, a heart-broken father, and win his lasting gratitude, together with a liberal reward."

"How interesting. Do tell me all about it," and she settled cosily back in her chair with an air of expectancy.

Then, beginning with their boyhood days, he sketched incident by incident in their lives; told of John's entrance into his father's business, his gradual rise; struggles for justice in behalf of the employees, and of the final rupture and his sudden departure. He spoke of the father's remorse, his change of attitude towards his subordinates, his appeal to him and then of his sending him out on this expensive and tedious search. In his easy manner, Alex told of visits to lumber yards, logging camps and many other places where his cousin might be employed; places in which he had several peculiar encounters and a score of thrilling adventures.

"But my last and most brilliant achievement," he concluded, "was a race against time, when, with about one hundred and twenty-five pounds of southern beauty in my arms, I outfooted an express train and saved a lady from being left penniless and alone in a Mormon city."

Miss Whiting laughed heartily. For an hour she had listened to the narrative with interest; growing

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tearful or indignant just as the import of the numerous incidents impressed her, but the picture he called up of himself flying through the air with her under his arm, made her laugh outright. Almost instantly, however, she settled into seriousness as her deeper feelings came to the surface and said, "To the end of my life I shall never forget your chivalrous act. I shall always think of you as an angel of mercy flying through the air toward me." Rising abruptly, for it had grown late in the day, she extended her hand as she added warmly, "You have royally entertained me, Mr. Grant, and I thank you for this hour of pleasure and profit. When it is convenient for you, I shall be delighted to have your company at any time during the remainder of our journey." Dropping her hand, Alex returned immediately to his copy, but as she reached the forward part of the car, Miss Whiting turned, with her hand upon the knob, and watched the new friend as he arranged his papers. Suddenly he raised his head and his eyes met the interested gaze bent upon him, which so mortified the girl that she hastily left the car, while a deep blush mantled her cheeks.

CHAPTER IV

A SOCIAL CHAT

A VERY pretty picture Miss Whiting made as she reclined in an easy-chair facing the rear door of the Pullman. She held a magazine in her hands and though she apparently was reading industriously, the eagerness with which her eyes sought the door every time it opened or closed clearly indicated an attitude of waiting and expecting some one. She was alone in the car, her fellow-passengers having gone back to the observation. Her excuse to remain alone had been that she wanted absolute quiet and a rest; but a close observer might have adjudged otherwise. Be that as it may, it was with secret thankfulness that she found herself the sole occupant of the parlor car. Several times within the hour had her eyelids been quickly lifted, only to drop again to her reading, in evident disappointment. She finally became quite restive and was about to leave her chair, when the door swung inward and a brisk step approached her. She did not attempt to conceal a smile of pleasure as Grant approached and dropped into the chair opposite her.

"I was almost persuaded that your protegee of

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yesterday had been overlooked in the more congenial pleasures of the journey," she said with a sly glance of her brown eyes. "I have been waiting a whole hour for you, not wishing to go away lest you should come and fail to find me. And just think of the beautiful scenery we have passed in that time."

"I did not want to intrude, Miss Whiting. Had I known you were waiting for me I should have been here just one hour earlier. You must pardon me and believe that my inexperienced youth leaves me unfamiliar with the—the—"

"Whims of women?" she assisted laughingly.

"I should scarcely dare to use the word 'whims,'" he replied, "I think vicissitudes the more applicable, in that it is not so clearly defined and therefore the safer term. But admitting there are traits in the—gentler sex—which we masculines cannot understand—won't you agree with me that woman is sometimes hard to fathom? She is so liberally endowed with an intelligence, social and domestic, that although we cannot understand her view-point, yet we realize that she must be as she is."

"In other words, she may be considered as an absolute necessity," said Miss Whiting smiling.

"Yes—an absolute necessity; else man would not slave for her, fight for her or——"

"Fly through the air to save her from becoming alone and penniless in a Mormon city," she finished archly.

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"I am proud to acknowledge that act, Miss Whiting, especially when the flight was inspired by an object of such divine beauty."

"Mr. Grant I fear you are giving away to the masculine tendency to flatter," in a slightly reproving voice.

"To praise the beautiful is natural, even though we fear that beauty like the rose may return our effort with a sting."

"How poetical," she laughed. "You seem to be always in the best of humors, my friend."

"Indeed I am not," he answered stoutly. "At least I am not when I see a woman who appears sincere in her belief that any man is not to be trusted; when we are all alike to her. Of course such a woman has not met the right person, for when she does, it will be love on sight with a vengeance."

"You surprise me."

"Sometimes I get mad, too, when I think there are some women who get married simply to have a man to abuse. But I suppose she can't help that either. God made her so."

"Why—Mr. Grant."

"But yet, in spite of her abuse, the husband will not be able to exist without her—for that is the way God made man—unfortunately."

"Do you mean to say, that though a wife be bad, the husband will cling to her?" asked Miss Whiting in amazement.

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"You just interfere in a combat between a husband and wife, and they will both turn on you. Or speak disparagingly of one in the other's presence, and you will instantly be brought to account. Though they may quarrel, yet they love. Leaving man's eccentricities out of the question think of the chief characteristics of woman. When she will, she won't, and when she won't, she will. It was ever thus, and ever will be. Nevertheless, we love her and would willingly die for her. She can't help her nature—so there you are."

Miss Whiting laughed heartily. "I am inclined to admit you are right, Mr. Grant. But how a young, unmarried man can have acquired so much knowledge concerning us, astonishes me."

"I have a sister at home. Shortly before I came away, I asked her to sew a button on my vest. She promised to, but didn't. The same day she became vexed and vowed she would never speak to me again. Within a half hour she asked me to loan her a dollar."

"And of course you did?"

"I did, to save my reputation for brotherly liberality."

"Did she finally sew on the button?"

"She did not. She said she would, which, properly translated, meant she would not. Mother did the thing without my asking her."

"But do you not think if the average man exercised more patience, and sought to draw out her love, the

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average woman would in time reciprocate? The feminine heart is tender—its love is deep. A kindness is more fully appreciated than is sometimes shown upon the surface. And even an injury is freely forgiven when a disposition to make amends is exhibited. And yet you men have always misunderstood us.”

“For which you are not to blame?”

“Are we to be blamed for what man is unwilling to learn?”

“Hardly. And yet I know a man in Vermont who has lived with his wife for forty-five years, and is not fully acquainted with her yet.”

“Does he aggravate her?”

“Not at all. He is a very even-tempered man, and a good provider. He has been studying her for years, and each day is on the alert for further information. She takes him on different tacks, and he only laughs at her, which further raises her ire. Yet she is faithful to a fault, and loves him with all her heart.”

“The reasons are obvious. She is tired of monotony and seeks to fire him. If he would retaliate occasionally it would please her the more. Then she would have an opportunity to cry, force him to seek forgiveness, and this would be followed by the sweetest of make-ups. Woman was created upon the excitable plan; she thrives best when anticipating a change, slight though it may be. A drive in the carriage; an evening at the theatre; a day’s vacation in the company of her husband;

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or a tea-party at home, are her very life. If men would consider these privileges after marriage as they delighted in them before, contentment would often replace the weariness and worry of hundreds of devoted wives."

"Admitting your theory to be true, and regretting that we are not more upon the alert to anticipate the wish of those we love, the inability of man to understand woman dates back to the beginning of time. Much as we appreciate her, and hard as it is to exist without her, incidents occasionally transpire which mystify past knowledge, and cause us to speculate as to when the days of changes shall cease. But woman should not be blamed for the conditions of her creation. If we are to accept the truth of an ancient legend, your sex was originally formed under peculiar circumstances.

"When Twashtri wished to endow our initial parent with a companion and helpmate, he found he had employed all his materials in the creation of man. There remained not one solid element. Thereat Twashtri, perplexed, fell into profound meditation. Then he aroused himself and created a combination. He took the lightness of the leaf, and the glance of the fawn, the gaiety of the sun's rays and tears of the mist, the inconstancy of the wind and the timidity of the hare, the vanity of the peacock and the softness of the down on the throat of the swallow, the harshness of the diamond, the sweet flavor of honey, the cruelty of

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the tiger, the warmth of the fire, the chill of the snow, the chatter of the jay and the cooing of the turtle-dove. He melted all this and formed woman. Then he presented her to man. Eight days later the man came to Twashtri and said:

“‘My lord, the creature you gave me poisons my existence. She chatters without rest; she takes all my time; she laments for nothing at all, and is always ill.’ And Twashtri received the woman again. But eight days later the man came again to the god and said:

“‘My lord, my life is very solitary since I returned this creature. I remember how she danced before me singing, I recall how she glanced at me from the corner of her eye, that she played with me, clung to me.’ And Twashtri returned the woman to him. Three days only passed and Twashtri saw the man coming to him again.

“‘My lord,’ he said, ‘I do not understand exactly how, but I am sure the woman causes me more annoyance than pleasure. I beg of you to relieve me of her.’

“But Twashtri cried: ‘Go your way and do your best.’

“‘I cannot live with her,’ the man replied.

“‘Neither can you live without her,’ said Twashtri.

“And the poor man went sorrowfully away, murmuring: ‘Woe is me, I can neither live with her nor without her.’”

Hardly had Miss Whiting’s laughter ceased to ring

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through the car when a woman of perhaps forty, plump in form and comely in feature, approached the couple with a firm step. There was serious meaning in her eyes, which were fixed upon young Grant, making it apparent that she had been an interested, not to say indignant listener to his treatise upon the creation of the mother of her sex.

"Young man, do I understand you to hold woman responsible for the original sin of the world?"

"It is a problem which never has, and I fear never will be satisfactorily solved," replied Grant. "Eve inaugurated the desire for feminine wisdom and knowledge by partaking of forbidden fruit, causing the downfall of herself and husband, and the Adamses have kept up a lively contention over it ever since, with the end not yet in sight. But it is a well-known circumstance that the serpent that tempted her, formerly a creature of the air, was deprived of his wings, and has since been compelled to navigate upon his stomach because of an undesirable prominence in the catastrophe."

Miss Whiting laughed outright, but the new-comer eyed him sharply.

"Pardon me, but have we not met before?" she asked, with a condescending bow.

"I believe we met at Burlington, Vermont. You lectured there on 'Woman's Rights,'" he responded amiably.

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"Ah, yes; and you were the representative of a daily paper."

"I was."

"And you were admitted upon my press tickets," with a superior air.

"As newspaper men always use press tickets, when given in lieu of payment for notices."

"And I remember, you were accompanied by a very pretty young lady."

"I was."

"You gentlemen find it difficult to exist without the luxury of feminine company."

"My sister's company is always a luxury."

"I recall the resemblance, now that you speak of it." She was evidently leading him on with a view to dealing a crushing blow, for her manner indicated that she had not forgotten the plainly worded report of her subject. "A very sensible young lady, I am sure. I could but note her constant attention to my lecture. She appeared to drink in every word I uttered."

"She profited largely by your suggestions."

"I am glad to know that my original presentation of the subject was beneficial to her," said Miss Shepard, changing her icy attitude perceptibly. "I observed that she possessed the rudiments of a useful member of society, and needed only an experienced mind to change her naturally strong personality into the rapidly enlarging current of Woman's Rights and Privileges."

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"She informed me on our way home that her mind had been materially strengthened in many ways," said Grant innocently.

"I am so glad. The dear child," said the lecturer gushingly. "How I should enjoy leading her out personally. A most promising convert to my theories is your intelligent sister, Mr. Grant."

"Yes, Ethel is a changed girl. She asked my forgiveness for failing to do her duty by me as her brother, and declared her intention of beginning a reform, with me for a subject."

"How delightful. And she made reference to me as effecting the change?"

"She gave you all the credit."

Miss Whiting choked suspiciously, and coughed softly.

"Will you tell her how thankful I am, Mr. Grant?"

"I have a number of times expressed my thankfulness for your visit to Burlington," he answered, "for she kissed me and said you had developed in her a spirit of opposition to the fanatical theories you represented. She further said that you talked as though the women owned the earth, held a mortgage on heaven, paid Satan a high salary for keeping Hades hot for our reception, and that you were commissioned to subdue the masculines or exterminate them. Now, home is a paradise of continuous love and peace."

A roar of laughter followed from several of the

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passengers who had returned from the observation car and were amused listeners to the spirited tilt. Miss Shepard in her anger did not notice them.

"The hussy!" she exclaimed. "And she dared think such things of me? Then I was not mistaken in my study of her features, upon which were the evidence of weakness. I have yet to meet the man whom I would soothe with a kiss. Such silliness is nauseous, and demonstrates a lack of self-power in personal control, or the meeting upon superior grounds of a less intellectual being. It also reveals a lack of the true principles of love. Love in its essence comes through the channel of proper government, and yielding to an inferior being is not typical of a masterful mind. The earth should be controlled by those who are the means used of God to inhabit it, and if we women are not the source of its population, then who is, pray? Have we not the right to control that to which we give birth? Shall we allow our masculine offsprings to assume the reins of government? Never." She was now pacing back and forth like a caged tigress.

"Madam, have you a husband?" The question was put in a smooth, calm voice.

"No. A thousand times no," she sniffed. "I have yet to submit to the dictations of man."

"Then what part have you with the populating fraternity?"

"The right of a woman who seeks to uplift her

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down-trodden sex, the belittled slaves of coarse, unfeeling brutes who would grind them to powder under an iron heel."

"Does your analysis of justice demand that woman shall be the head of the home?"

"Is she not the foundation of the home? Does she not slave to make it a home? Is she not the one responsible for its proper, its systematic management? Is it not her heaven or her hell? Who else, then, should control it?"

"Then where does man's part begin?"

"It begins with ample provision; with assistance in the home cares; with his evenings at home that the wife may seek recreation in outside pleasures; and ends with an appreciation of and a love for the family which God has given him."

"And the wife should carry the purse?"

"Is it not her right, when she alone knows the needs of her home? Is she not more discreet in matters of finance?"

"Would you allow him a vacation—occasionally?"

"In the company of his wife. If he loves his family he will be glad to have them with him. His mental and moral weakness is too well known to allow of his being trusted alone."

"Should the wife do the banking, hold the bank book, and make the will, in case of death?"

"Is it not her right? Should she in her weakness,

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with a family, be expected to face adversity penniless? Who can trust man to deal justly with those he leaves behind when we have such proof of the opposite?"

"Would you, as the wife, bequeath the surplus to the husband?"

"For some other woman to squander? Never. It should be placed in trust for the children; in case of no issue, to provide other widows and orphans with the means which a thoughtless husband had neglected to endow."

"And you would leave him, a mental wreck, to seek the charity of a long-suffering public?"

"Better that than he should appropriate the belongings of his children."

"Madam, were you ever disappointed in love?"

"How dare you ask such a question?"

"But, my dear——"

"Don't you *dare* call me *your* dear, you young wretch," she cried, facing about and shaking her clenched hand in Grant's face. "And before all these people. How *dare* you! How *dare* you!"

Alex could no longer control himself. Throwing himself back in his chair he laughed till his sides ached, and Miss Whiting, herself convulsed, found it necessary to shake him before he could cease. The others equally enjoyed the outbreak of hilarity, and when quiet was once more restored the advocate of woman's rights had disappeared.

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"I am so glad you vanquished her, Mr. Grant," said Miss Whiting. "She has been a torment to the car ever since I boarded at Denver. None of us could equal her in argument. We all considered her invincible. I feared for you when she approached us, for I observed that she had been listening to your legend of woman's creation."

"She has a strong argument, and several times had me all but floored," said Grant. "I have never met her equal, and am not surprised that her services are in demand. But her vehemence, when under full sway, opposes her otherwise eloquent lectures to the extent of injuring her influence in behalf of the cause."

"The very conclusion that I arrived at, Mr. Grant," replied Miss Whiting. "Let us hope that we shall have your home experience of 'continuous love and peace' for the rest of our journey."

Then the gong sounded, and together they started towards the dining-car.

This was but the beginning of a social cordiality which rapidly ripened into a close friendship, and when, in due time, the Limited steamed into the Coast City, Grant and Miss Whiting were inseparable.

"I shall not forget you," she said, as he assisted her into a cab bound for the St. Nicholas. "I shall expect to see you often during your stay in the city. Remember, I am now a stranger in a strange country," and with a half-pleading flash of the beautiful brown

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eyes, she was driven away.

An hour later, contrary to his intentions, Alex Grant registered at the St. Nicholas Hotel. The appealing eyes had done their work!

CHAPTER V

GRANT CREATES A SENSATION

AGAIN are the streets of Burlington in a flutter. The *Free Press* is in much greater demand than usual. Newsboys skip nimbly from customer to customer crying at the top of their voices: "*Free Press, Free Press. Buy Free Press. All about Alex Grant. Free Press.*" The little fellows are enjoying their brisk sales, and the pennies rattle as they race about, ever on the alert to increase their small earnings. Alex's name is handled to good advantage, as he is popularly known throughout the city, and all are anxious to ascertain the news concerning him.

Not since the celebrated political upheaval, which had turned the election's tide, and is still an occasional subject of discussion, have their sales been so large. As a result the juvenile paper merchants are in high glee.

"Here, boy, give me that paper,—quick," said a well-dressed middle-aged gentleman excitedly.

"Can't do it, mister. It's all I got left, an' it's promised. Th' s'ply's runned out."

"I will give you fifty cents for it."

"Sorry, mister, but can't do it. My customer's

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lookin' fer 't, an' I got ter do bizness right."

"Will a dollar buy it?" and the gentleman looked keenly into the upturned face.

"Go me a half better an' it's yourn."

The purchaser smiled, and pressed a two-dollar bill into the small, dirty hand. He liked the boy's enterprise, and was willing to reward it.

"Now, my lad, tell me, what is it about Alex Grant?" he asked, adjusting a pair of gold-mounted eye-glasses.

"Had er fight in San Fernciscer. Swiped a feller's wife, an' licked er stuffin' out'n him fer interferin'. Oh, he's a jimdandy, he is. I know Alex Grant. Us'd ter be editer on the *Free Press*. Betcher five dollar he kin knock out any duffer 'n Californy," and off sprinted the youngster holding tightly the bill buncoed out of the rich man.

In his usual deliberate manner Robert Grant unfolded the paper, and there, staring at him from the front page was a two-column black heading, reading as follows:

AN EASTERN CYCLONE.

A Young Sport from Vermont Starts on the Rampage.

Handsome as a Prince, Dressed in the Latest, he Steals a Wife's Affections and Pummels Unmercifully the Husband for Attempting to Rescue Her. The Couple Leave the City. The Husband Interviewed.

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"The peace, the chastity, the well-earned reputation for correct morals of our beautiful city have been ruthlessly infested. Mr. Alex Grant, a smooth-faced, innocent-appearing stripling hailing from the Green Mountains, is responsible for one of the most exciting fistic contests San Francisco has ever known.

"None of us suspected him capable of such an outbreak, or of so heinous an act. We had learned to love him during his five weeks' sojourn, for his geniality, his liberality, and apparent social standing. He came to us with unquestionable letters of credit, and did business with the First National Bank. He was on cordial terms with the cashier of the corporation. He moved in the highest society, and enjoyed all that heart—a conservative heart—could wish. We looked upon him as a model young man whom it might be well for some of our youths to pattern. We treated him as we supposed became his station in life. He was given the freedom of our matchless city. Above all, we approved of and admired his extreme modesty. He deprecated all reference to appearance or popularity. He was simplicity exemplified.

"But, ye gods! That lamblike product of the Green Mountains has more dynamite to the square inch than any bucking bronco 'twixt here and the Rockies. He is full of ginger, of powder, of pluck, bull-dog tenacity, of genuine, unadulterated, all-wool, yard-wide, dare-devil cussedness. The temperature

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of Vermont may serve to confine him within the six-rail fence of respectability, but he was never put up to keep in this climate. He foments; he froths; he snaps the cork-string and fires the cork; the walled-up forces break loose, and we law-abiding citizens must stem the flood.

"A posse from Vermont should be sent here at once to conduct this youth home. We can't keep him. The state is not large enough to accommodate his antics, nor does it possess the wealth to make good the wrecks resulting from his cyclonic nature. He should be sent overland by caravan. Should he explode upon a train it would be sure death to some one; if he broke loose upon the water, the vessel would sink. He requires the free prairie air in which to expand.

"For the past five weeks there has also been sojourning at the St. Nicholas, a very beautiful young woman purporting to be a Miss Whiting, the daughter of a wealthy resident of Montgomery, Alabama. She arrived on the same train with Grant, and appearances indicated that their acquaintance began outside this city. She was, however, expected, and luxurious apartments awaited her. She possessed an abundance of ready cash; a span, a carriage, a coachman were at her service. She, too, was modest and refined; a musician of no mean order; her voice enchanted; her conversation entertained; she was the idol of the hotel.

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"Together they appeared upon our streets. Their drives into the country were unlimited. The magnificence of the city's surrounding scenery was their delight. They were conspicuous in strolls through our parks. The theatre was frequently their resort. They worshipped as one at a fashionable church. They were inseparable. We believed it for the best; they were both so handsome, so perfectly mated, so peculiarly devoted to each other, and contented in each other's company, that we personally went so far as to decide that it was the Almighty's plan, who has made

'For every man a woman—

For every woman a man.'

Up to within twenty-four hours we would have considered it a sin—a flagrant sin—to separate them.

"But, like many another, this daughter of Eve was not what she represented. She turns out to be the American wife of a noted French professor of fencing, sparring and wrestling, connected for a short time past with a prominent sporting house of this city. Until to-day he was looked upon as having no peer in his profession on the Pacific Coast.

"Four months ago she left the comfortable home he had provided for her at Los Angeles, and though diligently sought for, her place of hiding could not be found. Last week Professor DeLaurie, her husband, saw the pair driving through our streets, apparently

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at peace with each other and the world. He watched; he gathered information. Yesterday he pleaded with the young man to allow his wife to return. His home was lonely, his heart was sore; he must enjoy her presence and love once more. He would forgive all if she would but return to him. But the flint-hearted, conscienceless scape-goat refused—positively refused, to listen. An appointment was finally agreed upon for to-day at the St. Nicholas, in the reception room of which DeLaurie appeared at the specified hour. Grant and the woman appeared also. The husband appealed to his rival's manhood, but to no purpose. He argued, he wept, but tears availed him nothing. He attempted to rescue his precious wife, but received a blow in the face. He was about to protect himself with a weapon of defense, when the bad man from Vermont knocked him down and took it away. A large number of spectators collected, one of whom was our sporting editor. They all (except the writer) favored the polished villain from ruraldom, as did also the cause of the contest.

"The fight was now on. The professor, in spite of his science, was beaten and knocked down. He arose to the fray, but very soon was a pitiable sight. He was hit upon the face, upon the breast, over the heart, under the heart—on any part of the person which the athletic tornado desired to reach. His exhibition of fistic science was the finest ever witnessed

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in this part of the country. He might have been a ring professional from the manner in which he handled the Frenchman. What that bland-faced sprig of a Green Mountain farmer don't know about blocking, ducking, side-stepping, rushing and getting away is not in the catalogue of expert pugilism. His footwork was magnificent, his springs cat-like. He outpointed his antagonist at every turn.

"Finally DeLaurie clenched to save himself from further punishment, but even in that strategy he came to grief, for Grant floored him with ease. At last, with face disfigured, with heart broken, and spirit crushed, he rushed for the stairs, only to be the more humiliated by a vigorous kick in the rear that sent him in a variety of ways to the hallway below.

"With most provoking coolness the victor returned to his lady-love, who smiled sweetly upon him, proudly took his arm, and together they left the room, amid the cheers of a hundred voices.

"A mystifying feature of the affair was the approving attitude of Landlord Mansfield, whose strictness as to morals is well known, the presence and expressed pleasure of Detective Greer, and the failure of any one, privately or officially, to demand justice in behalf of the injured husband. Verily the young wife-stealer and husband-smasher had bought them up, landlord, official, spectators and all.

"Grant and his paramour immediately left the hotel

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and were later seen to board a train for the Southwest. It is to be hoped that their presence in our city, as a disturbing element at least, is at an end.

“The sympathies of a patient, justice-loving public are with the bereaved husband, who was later interviewed by a representative of this paper.”

CHAPTER VI

A FAMILY CONSULTATION

"A FOLLOWER of satanic works is that boy. I am almost sorry I sent him out. But he exhibited his well-known gameness. He has the pluck and staying powers of his father without a doubt," and a smile came to Robert Grant's lips as he hailed a passing cab and requested to be driven to Champlain Avenue, his brother's residence. "There is something beneath the surface—a cause for the disturbance. Alex had good reason for displaying his prowess. There may be a woman in the mess, but I am of the opinion that blackmail is also a part of the ingredient. That boy did two things—he refused to pay, and he protected the woman. I haven't watched him from babyhood without becoming familiar with his characteristics. He was always John's champion, and would face a dozen before showing the white feather. Before thirty-six hours elapse there will be another version, and my nephew will be exonerated. I'll talk to Brother about it. He will be immensely pleased with his boy's science, which is the result of his own systematic training." Then, leaning back in the carriage, Mr. Grant gave way to meditation until his destination was

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reached.

Instructing the hackman to wait, he walked up a gravel walk to his brother's pleasant home, and entered the front door without knocking. Going straight to the library, he settled himself in an easy-chair and awaited the owner's pleasure, who was at breakfast with his family. Presently John Grant entered. He was a man of perhaps forty-nine, stood five feet ten; had regular features, with a jaw, which, while by no means out of proportion, denoted purpose. His countenance bore a genial, fun-loving expression, his deep blue eyes twinkled merrily on the slightest provocation, or snapped dangerously at opposition. Yet there was a dignified bearing about him which made him a most attractive man. His easy motion showed athletic training, and the well-preserved, vigorous body spoke of a temperate, moral life.

As a prominent lawyer he was well known throughout the state, and in the capacity of attorney-general he was respected for his purity of purpose and devotion to the trust placed in his keeping.

"Morning, Bob," he said cordially, selecting a reclining chair. "What brings you around so early? Anything special afloat?"

"I should say there was. That boy of yours has turned San Francisco into a battle-field. Read that," and he tossed the *Free Press* to him.

The father had just unfolded the paper when Mrs.

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Grant entered, and with a pleasant "Good morning, Robert," perched herself upon the side of her husband's chair, her arm resting lightly on his shoulder as she read with him the account of their son's escapade.

She was a beautiful woman; tall and straight, every curve of her still perfect form exhibiting gracefulness. The facial expression was firm yet benevolent, winning at the first glance the highest regard of an observer. To meet her was to love her; to win her love was to retain it through life. Mrs. Grant was worthy to be looked upon with pride as a descendant of the great Allens to whom her home state owed so much. And none appreciated her worth more than a loving husband and family.

A smile played about the father's mouth as he progressed. He chuckled. Then a hearty "Ha, ha, ha," broke from him.

"Why, John, I don't see anything so very amusing," protested Mrs. Grant soberly.

"Oh, ha, ha, ha," was all he could answer.

"It is a serious matter to me," she continued. "Do hold the paper steady, so I may read on."

"I can't, Mary. I have an attack of the shakes."

"Then I will help you," and circling his neck with her arm, she placed a white hand over his mouth. But he continued to shake with merriment, while tears of laughter raced down his cheeks. The mother smiled occasionally, but as a whole took the incident

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more to heart.

Finally they reached the end, when Mr. Grant gave way to peal after peal of laughter.

"A chip from the old block, isn't he, Mary? We ought to be proud of our son. His sporting blood has come to the surface. I will bet five dollars he went through that session without a scratch. It takes more than an ordinary professor to do up that boy. I didn't train him for mere pastime. I expected to hear from him when he got out into the world. Vermont always was noted for an ability to hold her own from the time of Ethan Allen to the present day."

"But, my dear, is it an accomplishment to be proud of?" asked his wife. "By this time it is known throughout the state, and what will the people think of us? You must remember the position you hold in the public eye."

"If Vermont's eye is banged up as much as that Frenchman's it won't see much," and off he went into another spasm.

"John Grant, I am ashamed of you," and indignantly leaving his side she took a seat near her brother-in-law.

"What is all this noise about?" said a bright voice, and pretty Ethel appeared through the door. "Father, you will raise the neighborhood. Good morning, Uncle Robert. Have you received any news from Alex recently?"

"I think we have, dear," said her father, handing

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her the paper. "I think that ought to satisfy you for a few days."

Ethel Grant was the prettiest of a group of young ladies and a favorite with all her associates. Resembling her father in feature and her mother in form, with a quaint humor peculiarly her own, she was numbered among the most attractive girls in her state. Her tendencies had always been toward home life, caring little for the gaieties of the community. When she did go out it was usually in the company of her brother, whom she idolized. Since his departure she had not been herself. It was their first separation, and her life was lonely. The horseback rides had been neglected, the croquet and tennis sets lay in the storehouse, and often traces of tears were upon her cheeks. Frequently letters reached her from Alex, which were read and re-read. Every few days she would appear at the lumberman's office and demand the privilege of perusing the latest news, which was always gratified.

"You make as much fuss over that brother of yours as most women would over a brand new husband," her uncle had bantered on one occasion as she sat in the private office devouring a long letter.

"He is better than a husband. He is my darling brother, and I love him," she had answered promptly. "I expect other women to fall in love with him, for Alex is handsome, talented and good. But the one who takes him from me will be his equal, or I shall

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object."

"Which means there will be a row."

Now she sat at the window eagerly reading the article which had so pleased her father. Upon reaching the end she looked up, a half-dazed expression upon her face.

"That is the end of all my pleasures, so far as Alex is concerned."

"What do you mean, dear?" questioned her mother.

"Alex has found his wife," she answered in a low voice. "And Uncle Robert is to blame."

"In what way, pray?" asked that gentleman.

"You sent him away. If he had remained at home, where he belonged, he never would have seen her, never would have fallen in love with her, and would have avoided the fight. But it is just like Brother Alex. He always was a protector of weak woman, and I am glad he gave that wretch the whipping he deserved. If she is pretty and good, as this article admits, I shall love her. But——" her voice ceased, and once more she was carefully studying the account.

"I am undecided what course to pursue," said the uncle. "I have been backing the boy with an expectation of his keeping from side issues. While I admit to his having covered much territory, and no doubt having been thorough in his search, I question the consistency of putting up at an expensive hotel and enjoying himself on my bounty."

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"Uncle Robert, I object to such a reference to my brother," said Ethel sharply. "Alex is not squandering your money. He has not called on you for a cent over the sum placed to his credit; nor will he spend that much. He is simply resting after months of continuous travelling. If you are not willing to allow him a breathing spell, then recall him at once. I for one shall be glad to have him here."

Mr. Grant laughed. "I might have expected such an outbreak from you, Ethel. I will retract the reference. It may be the account is incorrect, which I hope is the case."

"Don't worry, Robert. Alex will find John, and his limit will be the ten thousand," said the father. "I imagine he will leave California at once and make for the northwestern lumber regions. Your boy is not familiar with any other line of business, and will undoubtedly continue in his legitimate profession. I expect to hear of their meeting by fall, if not sooner."

"I have always placed confidence in Alex's honesty of purpose, but the suddenness of this California affair has slightly upset me," admitted the lumberman. "However, his own version may untangle the snarl."

"It is no snarl," laughed the father. "It is an outright victory over a villain who makes a livelihood by swindling soft-headed, weak-kneed people who are not clear as to the propriety of their mode of living. He came against an unprecedented proposition when

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he tackled Alex, and is now nursing innumerable wounds as the result of his rashness. It was unquestionably a case of blackmail, and my boy hedged. To-morrow or next day we will read the other side. The paper simply published the outbreak and evidence of the complainant. When the defense is heard the shoes will change feet."

"And my brother will be the hero of the hour," put in Ethel, rising and leaving the room.

"I am at a loss to grasp Alex's position," said Mrs. Grant in a half-meditative tone. "His disposition is so genial that the aggravation must have been unusual or he would never have given way to temper. But if the lady is a person of good repute, and her purity of character was assailed, then I should have been very sorry had he withheld his protection. Alex is a true gentleman, and no gentleman will allow an unprotected lady to be insulted. Ethan Allen once whipped a man for insulting a young lady, and then compelled him to go upon his knees before her and beg forgiveness. She afterwards married Ethan's brother, and became my grandmother, holding me in her aged arms when I was baptized. Alex has the true Allen spirit, for which I am very thankful."

"The Allen spirit and Grant science are an enviable combination," said the attorney-general humorously. "If old Ethan could have been a witness to that California contest his heart would have swelled with pride

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for the sprightly descendant."

"Let us hope the scene will not be repeated," said Mrs. Grant gently.

The uncle decided to await developments, and a few moments later was again in the cab, heading towards his place of business.

Hardly had he passed from sight when Ethel bounded into the library, her face aglow with happiness, and holding a letter in her hand. It was from Alex, giving a full account of his meeting with the fair Southerner, their arrival in San Francisco, and their many pleasant associations during the acquaintance of four weeks.

"I knew she must be beautiful and good," exclaimed the sister, handing the letter to her mother.

"But there is nothing mentioned regarding the disturbance," said Mrs. Grant, when she had read it through.

"It was written before that happened, Mother. He will tell us all about that in his next. For the present we will be content to know that she is one who is worthy of his protection."

"But if the charge against her character was made since the writing of this letter, which is evidently the case, we have yet to learn the results. If they are at large together, and the report said they took a train for the Southwest, it may be more serious than we anticipate. I hope the dear boy has not found himself in a trap. If she is an adventuress, it is hard to tell

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where the infatuation will end."

"It will end with his being brought home, if I have to go for him myself," replied Ethel in a determined voice.

CHAPTER VII

THE FRIENDSHIP DEEPENS

"MR. GRANT, I congratulate you upon your excellent judgment in the selection of a hotel," said Miss Whiting in a voice of pleasure, as they met upon the piazza shortly after the dinner hour. "I had fully decided to be chronically homesick among all these strangers, but now that you are here, I am sure there will be no cause for such an unenviable experience. Remember, I am still under your protection," and she smiled confidently into his face as they took possession of adjoining chairs.

"Your pathetic reference to 'a stranger in a strange country' was the influence that prompted the selection of a stopping-place," was his frank reply. "The more I considered registering elsewhere, the greater was my condemnation when I thought of the promise to guard your interests until you should have become acquainted with your temporary associates. You may consider me at your service during my two weeks of rest, when I shall leave for the northern wilds."

"I thank you so much, Mr. Grant," she said cordially. "Your company has already been such a pleasure, that I should feel quite lost without it, particularly

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under the existing conditions. You remember, old though the adage may be, yet how true, that 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'; and the present need is unusually stringent."

"Providing the friend does not become tiresome."

"But, truly, Mr. Grant, is it necessary to take so many risks, and undergo so many privations? Surely some other method of search could be devised. And do you really think your cousin would seek so dense a hiding-place because of a mere difference with his parent?"

"John is determined that nothing but a prolonged hunt shall ever discover to us his whereabouts. Like his father, he has a powerful will. But I am equally as determined to find him."

Yet, despite the young Easterner's resolve that nothing should interfere with his mission in behalf of the lost cousin, he felt also that a duty devolved upon him in regard to the fair Southerner, for whom he entertained the highest regard. The fact that she was among strangers, and unfamiliar with the ways of a western city, made it imperative that a reasonable amount of attention be shown her. He was in need of rest after the eight months of vigorous work, and the two weeks which he had set aside for a respite would give her ample time to become acquainted, when she would no longer require his services.

However, he would keep a sharp lookout, leisurely

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canvass the city, and if nothing developed to aid him in the search, he would leave for the North. His desire was that the endless journeying from place to place should be concluded as soon as possible, and with this purpose in view, coupled with an anxiety to be with the dear ones at home, he continually planned.

But even though her friends increased, Miss Whiting had no thought of dispensing with his company. As the days passed, her demands, even her dependence, upon him increased, until his presence in strolls, carriage drives into the suburbs and country, appeared to have become an actual necessity. Every provision had been made by her father for a pleasant sojourn in the coast city, including a span and coachman, and a liberal deposit in the bank. Nothing had been omitted that would add to her pleasure, and, evidently with the utmost confidence in her discretion, the loving parent had charged Landlord Mansfield that his daughter's slightest wish should be gratified.

And she had as generously resolved that the congenial young train companion who had so befriended her should share the luxuries with her. His presence added much to her pleasure, so he was her attendant wherever she went, until it became the most natural thing in the world for them to consult with each other before an intended outing.

The days went pleasantly on; each content in the other's company. Occasionally they would attend

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the theatre, and were regular worshippers at church services. They discussed the latest literature, sang together, and were adjudged an admirably mated couple. Her beauty so harmonized with his manly bearing that they became the central attraction wherever they appeared.

"I really cannot think of allowing you to go away until my father and brother return from Seattle," she said to him one morning two weeks following their coming to the city, as they left the hotel for a drive through the suburbs. "You have added more than half to my pleasure. What should I have done alone among strangers? Then, Father will wish to thank you personally for the many kindnesses, and I am sure you and my brother will be the best of friends. There is no need for haste in again seeking your cousin; two or three weeks will make no difference, and you need the rest so much. I have planned so many outings and other pleasures for the coming weeks, in which your presence will be indispensable, that should you leave me now, it would be a deliberate sin, and cast a gloom over the balance of my sojourn in San Francisco as well."

"But you have made so many friends among these people, Miss Whiting," he demurred.

One earnest look into his face, and he was her captive.

For who could withstand so magnetic an appeal?

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What man with a particle of emotion could resist the pleading glance of those glorious brown eyes? Her soft voice finally won the victory, and he promised to remain until she was safely in the father's care. From that hour Alex was her devoted attendant, with no thought but for her pleasure, and no reward but her deepest friendship.

Thus far their sojourn had been without special incident other than a continuous series of sight-seeing in and about the city. But when the third week had passed, Miss Whiting one evening suggested a visit to one of the opium dens in the Chinatown portion of the city, with the management of which they were both unfamiliar.

"I have so long wondered how such places were carried on, and we shall never have a better opportunity to inspect them," said the young lady.

"I fancy it is a doubtful undertaking, Miss Whiting, as those fellows have no principle whatever. But if you are prepared to take the risk of a possibly disagreeable experience, I will not forsake you," and Grant linked his arm within hers as they drew near the largest and most pretentious joint in the vicinity of which they were walking.

"I am not afraid—when you are with me," she replied, looking confidently into his face.

"Then in we go," he laughed, and a moment later they had disappeared through the door.

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The scenes which met their eyes were deplorable. Women richly attired reclined in private stalls smoking opium or sleeping off the effects of the drug. Men, once handsome and robust, but now human wrecks, lay upon the more common benches apparently lifeless, while the almond-eyed celestials plied their nefarious schemes at will.

Miss Whiting clung tightly to her companion's arm as they went from section to section, led by a wicked-looking fellow who appeared to be in control. In many cases the sights were revolting. A few moments satisfied their curiosity, and as they turned toward the entrance, Alex offered their attendant a silver dollar.

"Chinaman no takee dollah. Melican man give five dollah," he demanded.

"But I think one dollar is sufficient."

"Melican man give five dollah—Chinaman hit," and he edged between the visitors and the street exit, at the same time making threatening gestures with a wooden weapon in his hand.

Grant felt that trouble was brewing, and backed close to a side wall, for he had reason to believe that more than one Chinaman was ready to spring at him.

"You will take one dollar or nothing," he said in a firm voice.

"Melican man big pig. Chinaman kill um," and he raised the weapon.

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The trembling girl shrank still closer to his side. Slipping the coin into his pocket, he braced himself for action. His intention was to knock the assailant down and rush for the door, but noticing three others preparing to take part in the fray, he decided to move cautiously. Putting an arm about his companion's waist, they stood with backs almost touching the wall and met the almond-shaped eyes as they glared at them.

Suddenly, with a quick motion, the Chinaman raised the weapon and advanced. At the same moment Grant's right fist struck out, hitting his opponent a terrible blow on the point of his jaw and sending him to the floor. Then the three waiting fellows sprang forward simultaneously, but as many lightning blows felled them, when the Easterner sprang for the door, carrying the terrified, almost fainting girl with him. Then a fifth bounded from behind a screen and leaped toward them, a long knife in his uplifted hand.

By this time the Vermonter's fighting blood was boiling. With all his force he sent his right to the yellow jaw, and the victim landed, back downward, across a settee, fully ten feet away. It was a terrible blow, Grant caring little whether he killed him or not, so determined was he to separate himself and companion from such surroundings. When they reached the door it was locked, but a couple of vigorous kicks broke the bolt, and a moment later they were in the open air.

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It was naturally expected that the incident would be heard from ere many hours had passed, but the joint proprietors, evidently fearing exposure, made no complaint, and the affair, so far as the young adventurers knew, never came to light.

The Chinatown experience was but the first of a series of thrilling entanglements which were to make Grant famous in San Francisco and his home city,—experiences which, but for his ability to take care of himself, would have caused him unlimited trouble and perhaps his life.

A week later, when on his way to the First National Bank, Grant was approached by a fashionably dressed man of about twenty-eight, with the accent of a Frenchman, who politely asked for a few moments' interview. The request was granted.

He desired to know if Grant was familiar with the history of the young woman in whose company he was so frequently seen.

The Easterner eyed him squarely.

"She is my wife," said the stranger.

"Indeed?" drawled Grant.

"And Meester Grant must deescontinue to engage de lady's time."

"Yes?"

"And leave de ceety witout delay."

"Yes—or?—"

"Unless he did so he would be most forcibly, humil-

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iatingly, and indefinitely detained in de police station."

Mr. Grant thereupon replied that his birthright as an American citizen included the freedom of every city in the nation, so long as he kept the letter of the law, and met his financial engagements. No authority had the privilege of dictating otherwise.

"But de law did not allow of de monopolizing of odder men's wives, and he would give Meester Grant twenty-four hours to vacate de affections of his wife."

Alex decided that it was a case of blackmail, and determined to act in accordance with his belief. To the last remark he replied that he would consider and render a decision.

"When and where?" insisted the stranger.

"At ten o'clock next morning, in the St. Nicholas reception room."

"Witout a scene?"

"Without a scene." The business should be transacted as privately and quietly as circumstances permitted. At the same time Grant tactfully suggested that if a monetary consideration would bridge the matter he would be prepared to make satisfactory arrangements.

The Frenchman, however, would consider no offer in the way of a bribe; he simply demanded that his wife be returned to him without delay. But the keen-eyed Vermonter detected an avaricious gleam in the stranger's eyes, as the hour of meeting was agreed to,

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and when they parted it was with the understanding that neither would fail to be on hand.

The more Alex thought of the demand, the more he believed a reason to be lurking in the background. The Frenchman had not been trailing him without a cause. He concluded there was one or more behind the party who had approached him, and determined to sift the matter. For himself he cared little, but that a lady should suffer at the hands of such scoundrels,—and he did not for a moment doubt Miss Whiting's purity,—he would not for an instant stand. He would appear to desire a compromise, draw the pretended husband out, and then bring him face to face with her against whom he had made so gross a charge. He felt sure that the fair Southerner would disprove all relationship, and should the claimant persist, it might be the part of wisdom to chastise him then and there, if only to demonstrate his confidence in Miss Whiting.

It was a risky undertaking, but he felt sure of successfully counteracting the charges; as he had not been favorably impressed with the Frenchman's appearance, he resolved to clear the young lady at all hazards.

Upon returning to the hotel, he found Miss Whiting awaiting him with a letter in her hand, announcing the return, on the following week, of her father and brother from the North. She spoke happily of the deep friendship that was to exist between them, as her father would remember the excellent care Mr. Grant

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had bestowed on her, she knew. Then she told him of her home in Alabama and expressed the wish that she might see him there in the near future. She had so enjoyed his companionship at the western city,—it would be doubly appreciated in her southern home. Father and brother would join her in extending an invitation.

Grant said nothing to her of the interview and appointment with the Frenchman. With each moment his confidence in her increased, until her character to him was as pure as an angel's. Had she not told him of her home in the sunny South and invited him cordially to visit her there? Was she not anxious for him to meet her father and brother? Who could discredit such honesty of purpose? Who could question her professed interest in his humble self? The very thought of the villainous plot against her caused his blood to boil. She a party to a deception? She living a double life? Never. He would teach the scoundrel a severe lesson that he needed. Never again would the villain dare connect his name with this angelic girl. He would fight for her; he would die for her, if need be. Oh, that he might now lay his hands on the slanderer's throat!

Outwardly Grant was calm and attentive to her animated conversation, expressing his regret at their prospective parting and promising that the time of his visit to her home would be at a date immediately

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following the finding of his cousin.

A little later, when the landlord informed them that a box at the theatre was at their disposal, Miss Whiting decided at once that it should be occupied—the decision being made with such alacrity that Grant rightly surmised whose money had provided the evening's luxury.

CHAPTER VIII

FOR A WOMAN'S HONOR

DURING the interval Grant employed an official trailer, a Scotchman named Greer, with whom he was on friendly terms, to obtain all possible information regarding the accuser of Miss Whiting's character, that he might the more intelligently manage the coming interview. Greer's report was to the effect that the party in question was a boxing instructor and trainer at the Olympia, a prominent sporting club of the city. His name was DeLaurie, and he claimed to be a native of Paris. He had been in San Francisco about three months, and while considered well qualified in an athletic sense, was also becoming famous for moral degeneracy. Already he had drawn heavily on numerous well-filled pockets on threat of exposure, and was being watched by a private detective. Greer learned that he had been shadowing Grant and Miss Whiting for a week past, with the undoubted intention of evolving a scandal. His plan of operation, however, was unique, and did credit to his ability as a professional black-mailer. He would play the part of an injured husband, and as Miss Whiting was far from home, hoped to have her at his mercy. He had discovered that she

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was possessed of unlimited means, and believed that his scheme, carefully handled, would result in a liberal silencer for the protection of her character. He resolved to first appeal to the young Easterner, who was ever in her company, and secure an interview, when he would unfold his threats of scandal, to be withheld from publicity only upon the immediate receipt of a specified sum.

The initial move was most favorable to the success of his plot, as the young gentleman appeared disposed to shield his fair friend from unpleasant notoriety, and he looked forward to the appointed interview in high anticipation.

But he little realized the resourcefulness of the man with whom he had to deal,—that a trap was being prepared for him, which, when sprung, would not only check his scheme, but publicly expose his character in the most humiliating sense.

On the following morning Grant sought the landlord, acquainted him with the scheme and Greer's findings. Mr. Mansfield was astonished, perplexed, angered. He declared it an attempt to extort money, and stood for the southern lady's good name, as he had personally made arrangements with Mr. Whiting for his daughter's entertainment. He was about to summon an officer to arrest the swindler, when the Vermonter requested the privilege of handling DeLaurie in his own way. The plan of action was accepted without amendment.

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The enterprising host did not even object to a pugilistic encounter in his richly appointed reception room.

At precisely ten the Frenchman arrived and took a seat in a corner, not ten feet from where Greer was in hiding. His face bore a satisfied expression, and he appeared confident that the interview would prove satisfactory to him. He was unquestionably a handsome man, but with deep traces of dissipation about him. He was slightly heavier than Grant. His step was light, and every movement of the body but indicated a suppleness characteristic of the trained athlete.

In a few moments Grant appeared, shook hands in a friendly manner, and sat down facing him. The Frenchman opened the subject without delay.

"You have arrived at a decision?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes; I am prepared to pay for all the pleasures I enjoy."

"That is vell."

"What are your terms?"

"Vell, de lady is my wife, and it is not right for anodder man to take up all her time; but as she prefer your company to mine, it does not seem dat she would be satisfy to life wit her husband any more. I feel de loss of her presence so much dat I cannot sleep me at night, nor take pleasure in de day. I am a forsaken man, wit no home pleasures, for she is not dere. But if she vill not life wit me I cannot compel her, as she

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say dis is a free country, and de wife has rights as vell as de husband. I tinks de matter ofer very much last night, and decide, if you like to gif me two tousand dollars I vill not trouble you any more, but go away and leaf you to enjoy life togedder."

"A very reasonable offer, considering the loss of your home's happiness," replied Grant sympathetically. "And for how long will that sum satisfy you?"

"For effer. I vill not trouble you so long as I life. I vill leaf de ceety at once, and nefer come back."

"And you agree to refrain from interfering with the lady and myself, directly or indirectly?"

"Absolutely."

"I want that distinctly understood. If I am to buy you off, I shall expect you to keep out of our way. We cannot for an instant countenance a repetition of your demands. You must leave the city at once."

He looked at Grant suspiciously, but his apparent wish to retain the lady's company at any cost satisfied him, and he agreed to leave.

"My money is deposited in the hotel safe. As it would not, under the circumstances, be proper to give you a check, I provided the cash. Please remain here. I will return presently."

He went directly to the lady's sitting-room and found Miss Whiting dressed for the street and awaiting his coming. On pretense of wishing to speak to the landlord, he led her through the office, and then into

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the reception room by way of a side door near where DeLaurie was seated, and they were close to him before he was aware of their presence.

"Miss Whiting, do you know this man?" he asked, as they stood before him.

She looked straight into the Frenchman's face and answered without change of countenance or hesitancy in voice:

"No—I do not."

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"He claims to be your husband, and is here by appointment to receive two thousand dollars as satisfaction for the loss of happiness, and my continued pleasure of your company."

An indignant flush spread over her beautiful features as she met his defiant look. He realized his position, but determined to brazen it out.

"And do you believe him?" she asked, looking calmly into her companion's face.

"Not for an instant. I simply brought you before him, feeling satisfied as to the result. If it were true, I would pay double his demand to liberate you from such a wretch."

Miss Whiting began to tremble, and grasped Grant's arm for support. He led her to a seat and then turned to DeLaurie.

"What have you to say?"



"Miss Whiting, do you know this man?"

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"She is my wife," he persisted in a loud voice, springing to his feet and facing his opponent.

"Where did you meet her?" asked Grant, leading him on.

"In Denver."

"How long ago?"

"Two years."

"Is she an eastern lady?"

"She is from Virginia."

"Then how does it occur that she came here from Alabama to meet her father and brother?"

"She is not from Alabama, and has no fadder or brudder."

"She has ample proof."

"If she say she come from Alabama she is a liar. I——"

The back of Grant's hand struck his mouth with sufficient force to start the blood.

His hand went to his hip pocket, but a quick blow sent him to the floor, and before he could recover, Grant had snatched the weapon from his hand, and coolly handed it to Mr. Mansfield, who was a close and interested spectator.

Instantly the lithe Frenchman was upon his feet and rushed at his antagonist, but the equally supple product of the Green Mountains met his thrusts, blocking and side-stepping with an ease that surprised and puzzled the scienced professor, who anticipated an

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easy victory.

Suddenly Grant's vicious right shot through an opening and the professor again went to the floor. Then, as DeLaurie rose again and clenched, Grant threw him with the utmost ease.

By this time guests and outsiders had gathered to witness the contest, and recognizing the handsome Easterner as one of the participants, the interest was intense.

It was plain that the Frenchman had met his superior in the science of self-defense, and while not wishing to give up the battle at so early a stage, sparred cautiously, hoping to send home a blow, which as yet he had failed to accomplish. But Grant was anxious to end the scene, and letting loose all his forces, rushed at DeLaurie like a cyclone, beating his face and breast as he willed. The professor's guard was completely broken. He was utterly unable to protect himself. Gradually he worked toward the wide stairway descending to the street, and as he turned to avoid further punishment, the merciless Easterner gave him a parting kick, sending him in a most inglorious manner to the hallway below.

For a moment it was thought he had been killed, as he lay quite still, but suddenly springing up, he bolted through the door, leaving a silk hat as a memento of the well-deserved whipping he had received at the hands of a prospective victim.

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A deafening cheer, led by Landlord Mansfield, greeted the victory, as DeLaurie disappeared, and Grant would have been heartily congratulated had he not returned to Miss Whiting, who, with face beaming with gratitude and pride, linked her arm within his, and together they left the room.

As they disappeared, the voice of Greer rang through the room. "Aye, mon, but he's a daundy," he roared, and all knew that the canny Scot was well pleased with the showing of his young employer.

Nothing more was seen of the young people during the day, as they had taken a train ride some miles out of town, not wishing to face the curiosity which they knew must result from the affair.

Never in the history of the St. Nicholas Hotel had such a scene ever before occurred within its walls. The excitement was intense. While the cause of the encounter was known to but a few people, all were acquainted with Grant and, familiar with his genial disposition, were fully persuaded that the provocation had been sufficient to arouse his anger; and the sanctioning attitude of Mr. Mansfield went far to establish an opinion favorable to the Vermonter. His aptitude as a scienced athlete took the spectators by storm. None had the slightest inkling of his ability and were jubilant at his onslaught against the professed master of the art. The fact that not a blow had reached him, and DeLaurie had thrice been floored, was evidence

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of a skill possessed by few outside the ring. The kick, which sent the Frenchman sprawling to the lower hall, was too ludicrous to be passed by without an outbreak of merriment, and the shouts of laughter which greeted the fallen champion were lusty and prolonged.

Nor did the incident remain within the range of those who had witnessed the fight. A reporter of the *Daily Chronicle* was an interested spectator and when DeLaurie disappeared through the door after the encounter, he was immediately followed, his version of the story given, and the next issue of the paper had it set up in a two-column article, under large, black headliners. It was an exclusive article and sold the evening edition like hot cakes. It was anything but complimentary to Grant and the lady in wording, and, of course, set the whole city in commotion. The St. Nicholas management was censured by many for allowing such a disgraceful occurrence to come off in its rooms.

The young couple returned in the early evening, and upon entering the hotel, found the reception room full of indignant guests. A meeting was in session and resolutions of condemnation were being passed, together with the demand that a contra article be published in the morning paper. The true version of the affair should be made known, they insisted hotly.

Greer was making a fiery speech, in which Scotch

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adjectives predominated. He advocated the demolition of the *Chronicle* office; the banishment of its editors, and the extinction of the reporter who wrote the article, unless a retraction, an apology, and correct account of the merited chastisement appeared in the morning edition of that paper.

Speeches were also made by Mr. Mansfield, and several influential guests waxed eloquent over the wrong done the estimable young couple.

The result of the meeting was that the landlord, Greer and two guests were appointed a committee to wait upon the city editor, relate the circumstances, and demand an article in accordance with the facts. Their mission was carried out with alacrity, and the following morning a glowing four-column article appeared, giving a complimentary sketch of the now popular pair, an elaborate account of the attempt to blackmail them, the interview in the hotel reception room, and the humiliation of the Frenchman.

Meanwhile DeLaurie was not idle. His vicious nature called for revenge. He must have some satisfaction for his public humiliation. He thought not of the act that had caused his downfall; the results were what troubled him. Not only had he failed to replenish his pockets, but he had been completely outwitted—led openly into a trap by an apparent stripling from a rural state known as the "Green Mountains." But the innocent-looking product of

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that portion of America had proved less green than his nativity suggested. In a most forceful sense his seeming innocence and ignorance of the world's dark ways were the deceptive characteristics which had effected the undoing of a deep-dyed villain. He could not but admire the keenness of his antagonist, and he was too much of a sportsman not to recognize the ability he exhibited. But the exhibition had not been to his own liking, as the marks upon his face clearly showed. He admitted defeat, but it should not end there. His heart cried out for revenge, and he would never rest until a successful blow had been struck by him and his hatred satisfied. Following his interview with the *Chronicle* reporter, he went directly to his lodgings in the Olympia building, and so far as possible eliminated the bruises received in his encounter with Grant—and was so far successful, that when, later in the day, he appeared before his students, there were scarcely any marks upon him that spoke of the encounter. But before the morning edition of the *Chronicle* was sold, he had severed his connection with the Club, knowing that his usefulness was at an end, in that his prowess as an undefeated athlete was departed, and the fact that officers were upon his track made him more anxious than ever to retire from public notice.

His one ambition now was to shadow Grant, and for days he hung around the St. Nicholas, yet careful to

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keep from sight. Twice he was close upon the heels of the young Vermonter, but each time Greer faced him, and he took refuge in an alleyway. The wily Scotchman, suspecting a cowardly blow, determined to keep near his young friend and if possible catch the Frenchman in some criminal act that he might put him where he rightly belonged. Grant was warned to be watchful lest the fellow should lunge at him from the back, but he laughed at the suggestion and continued his free jaunts through the city as usual. Had he not promised to remain until Miss Whiting's relatives arrived, Alex would have used the precautions as an excuse to resume his search for his cousin; but to him a promise was sacred and under no circumstances would he forfeit her high regard, which now meant more to him than he was willing to admit.

So the rides and the strolls continued; the attendance at worship kept up; and as the time drew near for her departure and their consequent separation—for a time, at least—their interest in each other increased until their thoughts of friendship and those of love were divided only by the merest formality. But each felt that the time for an avowal of affection was not yet; both were discreet; both were cautious—and each felt in his heart of hearts, it was best to wait!

CHAPTER IX

THE FATHER AND BROTHER

FOR THE first time in his life Alex Grant was experiencing the power of love. Battle as he would against the increasing affection for his fair southern friend, he could not still the longing for her presence, now that the hour for departure was near at hand.

While recognizing that a move must be made toward fulfilling his duty to the anxious uncle,—for five weeks had elapsed since his coming to San Francisco,—and the search must be resumed without further delay, the very thought of a prolonged separation from Marion well-nigh overpowered him.

So many incidents had been crowded into his short acquaintance with her; so much had transpired to reveal her exceptional qualities; to him her womanliness, her depth of character were as manifest as though he had known her for years.

True, her natural modesty and consequent aloofness served to keep the heart-feelings in reserve, but the readiness with which she had accepted his company, her graciousness in inviting him to drives, messages which gave her an excuse to seek him when his absence seemed prolonged,—all allowed him a glimpse behind

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the heart-scenes that otherwise might have remained unknown.

The ready appreciation of his slightest attention, the apparent contentment when in his company, her plans, never fully decided upon without his approval, and her confidence in his integrity, were but the surface results of an inner regard that was deep and lasting.

When it became known that Mr. Whiting and son were to be expected at any hour, and that she must be prepared to leave for home immediately upon their arrival, he was upon the verge of an avowal of love. But, his better judgment predominating, he resolved to abide the promise to his uncle that nothing should come between him and the purpose which had led him so far from his eastern home.

For an hour he had been seated in a little nook of the parlor—a favorite resort of the young friends—thinking over all that had happened during the past five weeks, and trying to sum up the results of their romantic meeting and subsequent enjoyments, when a familiar voice sounded near.

“I wonder if he is not here,” and the object of his thoughts stood before him. “You runaway,” she laughed. “I have been hunting for you *fifteen minutes!* But I should have known you were here. A dispatch has just been received that Father and Frederick will arrive within two hours, and I must be ready to leave for home to-morrow morning.”

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"I am very glad for you, Miss Marion. But I shall miss you so much. Our five weeks' acquaintance has been such a pleasure to me. I shall never forget our associations in this city." He looked up into her face with a smile, but, woman-like, her intuition penetrated the thin veiling, and she read his heart as if it were an open book.

"I could never have existed without you, dear friend," she replied softly. "From the very first you have been a protector, until it has become quite natural for me to turn to you. Our first meeting was so peculiar and our associations have been so enjoyable, to me at least,—your numberless favors so spontaneous, that it all seems like a delightful dream. When Father and Frederick return they will never cease to praise you for the excellent care you have taken of me. The one green spot in my memory will be our stay in San Francisco."

"With a Green Mountain innocent as guardian," laughed Grant.

"My regard for the Green Mountain people has increased an hundred fold," she said, a perceptible tenderness in her voice. "You have gallantly upheld their reputation for noble qualities. But not one in a thousand could have been to me what you have been—I appreciate your worth—Alex, more than words can say."

The sound of his name upon her lips startled him.

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Then a glad light came to his eyes as he looked up and met her earnest gaze. Surely his inner feelings were known to her and this was the way she took to give him a glimpse of her heart. For an instant he could scarcely refrain from taking her in his arms to tell her of his love, which he felt would not be refused. She was so close to him; the beautiful eyes looked so trustingly into his own, that they seemed to tell him all he wished to know. Should he hear it? His heart was beating high, threatening an outbreak. Her near presence, so soon to be torn from him, called for some token more than hope. A declaration of love trembled upon his lips; he was about to speak from the fullness of his heart when the promise to his uncle again loomed up like a mountain before him, and, turning abruptly from her, he walked to the window and stood there, the picture of desperation. Love invisible, but all-powerful, pressed him without mercy. A great lump rose in his throat; he trembled like a leaf in a breeze. Before him floated his uncle's face, the lines of grief deepened; the erect body, bent and enfeebled and the greying hair white from anxiety. The lips moved in a piteous appeal: "Your promise, Alex; your promise to me; give me my boy; my life and your faith are at stake." Bracing himself, Grant turned impulsively to his companion, who had been watching him from beside the chair he had vacated. "Miss Whiting, you are a beautiful, pure, noble-hearted girl. As such I

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could but befriend you—and in so doing, I have doubled my own enjoyment. To know you, is to esteem you. Your companionship has been at once an honor and a privilege. I shall always keep the influence of your friendship before me in the work I am again to take up. It will aid in cheering me when I am once more alone. It will encourage me to push forward with continuous energy; and when my mission is ended I shall keep my promise to visit you in your southern home. Until then, remember me earnestly in your prayers: add that the God of heaven may watch over and keep me from harm. I shall need His protection,—for the regions I am about to traverse are filled with dangers. I, too, will pray for you, that God's richest blessings may be yours."

"And pray—pray that He may bring—bring you to—to me." She was again at his side, her hand resting upon his arm, the beautiful face uplifted to his. She had not been blind to his struggle, and readily divined the cause. Her admiration for his undoubted victory over self increased her regard, if that were possible,—and his personal sacrifice in behalf of duty was a pleasing revelation to her. He was her ideal of splendid manhood.

The tender heart throbbed, but, with that government of self known best to her sex, she calmly met his gaze, while a smile of infinite happiness rested upon her lips. "Alex, I shall await your coming. And in

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the interval my prayers for your safety shall be laid at the throne of God. Our associations have been very precious thus far, but let them not end here. I appreciate your friendship, and admire your manhood. I shall expect you at the earliest moment following the end of your search. In the meantime, be true to our God; be true to yourself and to your duty; and be true to our friendship. I shall not forget you. I——” the voice choked, and tears filled her eyes. “I——”

“Massa Whiting come. Massa Fred come. Whar be ya, Miss Marion?” and the bright, colored maid appeared, almost beside herself with joyous excitement.

“I am coming, Dinah,” and requesting Alex to wait her return, Marion hurried out to the reception room, glad to hide the tears that were trickling down her cheeks.

The tourists were seated at the extreme end of the room, listening to an elaborate account of Grant's encounter with DeLaurie as only Landlord Mansfield could recite it. Both father and son were intensely interested, and noting the father's gratified expression, the hotel man took occasion to enlarge upon the young Easterner's excellent qualities, feeling assured that a timely recommendation would not be amiss, considering the most cordial relations existing between the young couple.

Mr. Whiting was a handsome gentleman of about

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fifty-five, and the son, a tall, fine-looking, well-formed young man of about twenty-six, sat near him. In appearance the father and son closely resembled each other, and in many ways their characteristics were identical.

Frederick Whiting was all, and more than his sister had expressed, he was the soul of honor, and a royal good fellow, too.

A little cry of delight, and Marion appeared, only to be folded an instant later in her father's arms as she kissed him repeatedly. Frederick then came in for his share of sisterly affection.

"But where is this wonderful hero of yours, my dear?" her father mischievously asked when they had finally settled down. "The landlord has been entertaining us with an exhaustive account of his brilliancy in a variety of accomplishments, including an exhibition of pugilistic prowess, in behalf of my daughter. Is it possible that the fastidious Miss Whiting has found her ideal in the masculine pugilistic line?"

"He is far above that, Father," replied Marion feelingly. "Alex Grant is a man among men. It is very fortunate for your daughter that we met. He has been a valued friend from the moment of our meeting, which was most auspicious." Then, beginning with the Salt Lake City incident, she recounted his many acts of kindness, and his deeds of valor.

"And you say he is a product of the Green Mount-

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ains? That portion of America noted for its Reubenistic proclivities, its cow-hide boots, its home-spun garments, not to mention log-cabins surrounded by dense woods, hills, vales and rocky fields. Truly, the ambition of my beautiful daughter has experienced a fall."

"But, Father, Mr. Grant is a direct descendant of the famous Allens, Ethan Allen, you know. Besides, he does not wear coarse garments, nor cow-hide boots," and Marion surveyed her parent with an air of injured dignity. "He is a young gentleman whom you would be proud to acknowledge as an associate."

"Better have him come before us for inspection," suggested Frederick with feigned curiosity. "If he has been of service to my sister, then I desire to personally express my gratitude, even though he be clothed in the costume of his nativity. A man is a man, whether clothed in broadcloth or homespun. Tell your friend that I wish to shake his hand," as Marion rose to obey her brother's wish.

She found Grant sitting in deep thought. He was not aware of her presence until a hand was placed lightly upon his shoulder.

"Father and Brother wish to meet you," she said in a low voice.

With a start he looked up into her face. "I was enjoying a mental visit to my home," he smiled, rising. "It is wonderful how we may commune with our friends,

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even though thousands of miles away. Do you believe in mental telepathy, Miss Whiting?"

"I really have never given it a thought," she laughed. "But while I am awaiting your coming South I will investigate the science, and report upon your arrival. And were you really communicating with friends at home?" and she looked quizzically into his face.

"I was talking with my sister Ethel."

"And did she answer you?"

"Yes. She had read the first *Chronicle* report of my fight with DeLaurie, and said she believed you were true. She also praised me for standing by you."

Miss Whiting's eyes shone with delight. "O, Alex,—and she believed in me after reading that terrible story?"

"I had written to her a week previous, giving an account of our meeting, a description of yourself, and our cordial friendship. She told me over the invisible wire that my letter had arrived, and to tell you that she had faith in you. I could hear her voice as clearly as I can yours."

For a moment Miss Whiting was silent. Then looking drolly into his face, she said, "The next time you communicate mentally with sister Ethel, kindly give her my love."

"And shall I keep any for myself?" he asked daringly.

"All you wish," was the prompt response.

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Before he could answer they had reached the reception room, and Marion was introducing him to her father and brother.

If Mr. Whiting had any misgivings as to the wisdom of his daughter's intimacy with the young Vermonter, they passed quickly from his mind as the couple slowly approached, chatting familiarly. He at once divined the outcome of the acquaintance and was forced to admit the admirable qualifications of the young man, as the two drew near. The exchange of greetings was cordial. "Mr. Grant," said Mr. Whiting, shaking the young man's hand warmly, "I must thank you personally for your gentlemanly conduct and exceptionally fine care of my daughter. Your championship of her good name makes me your life-long debtor."

"It is gratifying to know that you approve of my conduct, sir,—but Miss Whiting has made many friends in the city, who, I feel, would have been delighted to chastise that blackmailer. Mr. Mansfield would have killed him, gladly."

"Yet none of her friends could have whipped him so scientifically, I fear," laughed Mr. Whiting, and Marion added, "You should have seen the commotion that whipping raised, all over the city. The guests here wanted to make him a hero, but the residents felt we were sadly lacking in conventionalities—or morals—for a few hours, at least."

"We shall be very glad to see you at our home in

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Alabama," put in Frederick cordially.

"I cannot tell when that will be," was the quick answer. "I am looking for a runaway cousin and the most rugged part of my journey is before me, I fear," and he related the purpose of his journey to the West.

"You have an interesting task on your hands," said Mr. Whiting. "I would advise you to take a guide along who is familiar with that part of the country."

"It is no easy matter to secure the kind of man I want," said Grant, "but perhaps I can find a scout further North."

"It will take you a year to cover the territory that lies before you. The lumber camps are numerous, and extend far into the forests."

An anxious look came to Marion's eyes. She had estimated that Alex would be with her before six months had elapsed. A year seemed a long time to wait. But she had confidence that he would hasten the time of his coming, and then——

Evening found the four in a box at the theatre. Marion, near her young friend, lavished him with attentions; the pretty sayings, the coquettish glance of the brown eyes, were all meant to draw out his affection, and make her remembered during their separation.

Nor did he forget the warm hand-clasp, the clinging pressure, the loving look into his eyes as they parted for the night.

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At Alex's request Frederick Whiting shared his apartments. And thus already had the Easterner and the Southerners become the firmest of friends.

CHAPTER X

THE PARTING.—A CLOSE CALL.—OFF FOR THE NORTH

SILENTLY the young friends stood awaiting the incoming train. The final expressions of caution had been passed: the promises to meet again in the near future had been freely given but the thought that before another hour had passed each would be drawing miles and miles further apart from the other, had tongue-tied their speech. Presently Mr. Whiting and Frederick joined Marion and Alex and the four chatted lightly together. As the southern express thundered into the depot, the two young people sauntered slowly towards the car steps and their hearts now too full to attempt expression, they waited silently until the conductor signalled "All aboard." Marion placed her hand in Alex's then—not trying now to hide the tears that blinded her eyes as they looked lovingly down into his.

"You will not forget to come—soon,—Alex?" she pleaded.

"As soon as my mission is over, you may expect me," he answered, gently pressing the hand that rested so confidently in his. Twixt smiles and tears, like an

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April morning she smiled again into his upturned face, before disappearing from sight into the Pullman, and Grant turned to leave the station immediately.

At that moment a figure sprang from behind a post and the report of a pistol followed, startling the crowd in the depot. With rare presence of mind Grant stepped sideways, made two or three bounds forward and an instant later DeLaurie lay stretched at his feet. A scream rang through the car, as Marion, who had been trying to catch a last glimpse of Grant, saw the act and feared he was seriously injured.

To reassure her, he faced the moving train and laughingly waved his hand to the white face at the window. A crowd surrounded Grant and DeLaurie but the victor paid no attention to them. Snatching the revolver from his assailant's hand, he slipped it into his hip pocket, before grasping the wretch by the collar, raising him to his feet and placing two well-dispatched kicks where he thought they would do the most good. DeLaurie landed in a heap several feet away from him and the crowd looked on approvingly.

"Aye, mon, but yer no dead yet," said a familiar voice and Greer elbowed his way to Alex's side. "It's na fault of his that ye are noo welterin' in yer ain bluid, this very minute," and drawing a pair of handcuffs from his pocket, the stocky Scotchman sprang towards DeLaurie, who, however, taking advantage of the confusion, bolted through the throng and dis-

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appeared around a building. Greer gave chase but with slight hope of overtaking him, as the Frenchman, he knew, was fleet of foot.

Without glancing backwards Grant entered a cab and was driven rapidly to the St. Nicholas. Half an hour later a telegram was handed him with the word "urgent" underscored. He tore it open and read:

"Are you injured? Tell me the truth. Wire me at ——— station. Marion."

Taking a blank from the waiting boy, he hastily pencilled the following reply: "Am uninjured; I leave the city at once. Alex." With a dollar in his hand for extra haste, the messenger dashed from the hotel, and now the thoroughly lonely Grant went at once to his apartments to pack his dressing-case for a trip that was to take him into the unknown northern wilds, of the adventures and dangers of which he had not the remotest conception.

We will not attempt to describe the many experiences of that memorable journey,—the thrilling deliverances from serious injury or possible death,—and scores of incidents which will cleave to his memory to the end of his life. His one ambition now was to hunt down John Grant, so that he might speedily return to his sweetheart. By every means obtainable, he located the principal lumbering firms, visited yards, camps and offices, but without success. On and on went the search, carrying him through Oregon, Washington

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Territory, Idaho, Wyoming and into the great state of Montana. Week after week passed and still his untiring energy continued. Here he was met with courtesy, there his courage was tested. Often the opposing influences and personal dangers seemed too great to be overcome, but his perseverance and tact eventually carried him through triumphant. In the midst of his travels and adventures, he found time to write a weekly letter home which kept his uncle in touch with his whereabouts. He also found time to dispatch a regular communication to the *Free Press*, and these breezy letters of his had become the keen delight of hundreds of readers.

The rustic nature of those northern states and territories pleased him. In many ways they reminded him of sections of his native state. The healthy climate, the general good-fellowship, the hospitable receptions, with here and there an inevitable rebuff, kept his interest continually quickened. Occasionally he would run across a former resident of Vermont, and they would both enjoy a treat in the way of exchanging gossip regarding friends "back East." It was fortunate for the young man's progress that this part of the country was traversed in the summer months, else many important places would have been omitted, because of lack of conveyance; as it was, an occasional wait, under the starry heavens or in a breezy cabin, was necessitated, but did not disturb his peace of mind.

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How often did tender feelings swell his heart as he thought of the California experiences and Marion's sweet voice. He still could feel the soft pressure of her hands and listen to the remembered laughter in the dear voice. Times without number had he coined letters in his mind, but paper seemed unworthy to contain his thoughts of her. Then he would push forward energetically, that his search might the sooner end, leaving him free to go toward the sunny South and the girl he loved. He knew she was waiting his coming there, and that knowledge aided materially in strengthening his courage. Finally he stepped over the state border into northern Dakota, with its fertile fields and prosperous, intelligent inhabitants. Town after town was visited; firm after firm, in the lumber trade, interviewed; yards, camps and logging sections alike thoroughly inspected, but with no trace of the missing heir.

It was the first day of September when, tired, home-sick, and ready to throw up the hunt, he arrived at Grand Forks, fully decided to take a week's rest. A very pretty little town it was, with well laid out streets and substantial buildings, showing the most modern of ideas in architecture and comfort. It was just such a town as would attract a tired traveller and Alex deemed himself fortunate in having reached the picturesque spot to while away his short resting time. Several persons nodded pleasantly as they met him in the

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streets and one lady seemed about to speak, but as he passed her brusquely, she had not time to address him. A pleasant-faced gentleman stopped and extending his hand, said in a welcoming voice, "Glad to see you back, Graham: we have missed you. Going to remain with us now?"

"I may," was the non-committal reply.

"Well come over and be neighborly, John."

"Thank you. Regards to the folks," said Grant, and before the other could offer further questions or remarks, he was out of ear-shot.

"The most favorable sign since I have left home," he smiled to himself, as he hurried towards the town's centre. "If John has been here, then our resemblance to each other is deceiving some of these good people. Those two girls over there now, know me, or rather 'the fellow that looks like me.' I'll get into difficulty if I don't look sharp. Still, there is a chance to obtain important information here, if I keep my bearings. If I assume John's identity for a while, they will never know the difference—and it will be jolly besides—that is, if they don't question me too closely on personal affairs of the heart."

"Well, John Graham! Are you really back?" cried a bright, eager voice. "We have all been wondering where you went to. Now give an account of yourself, Mr. Runaway," and she looked familiarly into Alex's face.

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"I've been away on business," he answered frankly, meeting the honest eyes squarely.

"I hope you are to remain here, now that you have returned?" continued the young lady.

"It is quite possible that I shall," he fenced adroitly.

"Oh how nice! Be sure you give my regards to Alice," and with a merry nod and laugh, the mischievous miss turned to her companion who was waiting a short distance away.

"Another evidence that my worthy cousin has been here. But I wonder who 'Alice' is?"

Presently he found himself opposite a large three-story frame building flaunting a mammoth sign, "GRAND FORKS LUMBER COMPANY."

For a moment he stood irresolute, staring across at it. So many times he had been disappointed in just such signs, that now their facing him sternly awoke no great concern within him. Everywhere the firms had heard nothing of the missing youth.

"It looks like a large concern," he argued tentatively, "and I suppose there is no harm in trying. I should be almost disappointed if I found him here, I am growing so used to failure," he finished, smiling whimsically.

He crossed the street and approached a door upon which was painted the word "OFFICE," pushed it open without further hesitation and entered the building.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XI

THE YOUNG PIONEER.—ONE OF MANY HORRORS

IT WAS during the early days of the great western influx, when scores of Easterners were breaking away from the old ruts of hand-to-mouth existence and seeking new homes in the far West, from whence came tales of fabulous wealth in precious metals and abundant crops,—when emigrants willingly faced the countless dangers experienced on the trail to better their condition, so great was their faith in the reported opportunities of the land toward the setting sun, that Billy Wheeler, a rugged, daring woodsman, who wearied of the cramped condition that had ever been his lot, strapped together his few belongings, and started for the Black Hills regions, then in feverish boom. Full of determination to “win out,” he turned his back on the old home and associations, facing towards the west.

On, on he strode, over hills, and through the dense forests as home, with freshly cut boughs for a bed, the spreading branches for a covering, and chippering squirrels for companions. Neither to the one side nor the other did he stray, but kept to his course,—due west. Occasionally he would consult a pocket com-

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pass, but never found it necessary to change his route. His stride was long, and the speed unusually rapid for a pedestrian.

Fully six feet in height, broad shouldered, and of symmetrical build, he looked what he was, a man of strength and endurance. His face was comely and benevolent in expression, but the evidence of firmness was clearly defined in the square jaw. His well-shaped head was covered with a heavy growth of dark hair, and a stubby beard covered the entire lower portion of his face. His garb was that of a huntsman, and hanging from his belt at the waist were a hatchet, a sheath-knife, and a brace of revolvers. From either shoulder were slung powder-horn and bullet-pouch, while a small knapsack-like bundle rested easily across his back. Dangling in hunter fashion, ready for instant use, was a trusty rifle that had never missed fire or failed to send its leaden messenger to the mark while in his steady hands. His left hand swung a gray slouch hat, the right fingers frequently combing back the long hair from his high, thoughtful brow.

"They said I was foolish to start on such a wild-geese chase," he muttered, as he tramped onward. "Perhaps I am; but I would be a greater fool to stick to the old farm, and follow trapping half the time to make the two ends meet. Bill Wheeler was created for something better than to serve others all his life. If there is gold in the Black Hills, I'll have my share

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of it, or know the reason why. It is worth trying for, anyway; and when Bill Wheeler tries he never fails. I'll win out, or my bones will bleach in the desert."

He quickened his pace, and for an hour made increased progress. Then, seeing a flock of geese flying over his head, he unslung his rifle, and a moment later the leader, a large, juicy gander, fell dead at his feet. It was a remarkable shot, but nothing unusual for the expert marksman, who always depended upon his gun for his food supply.

"That means it is time to dine," he observed casually, stooping to pick up the fine fowl, and entering the wood, along the outskirts of which he had been walking, he built a fire, and was soon enjoying a delicious, savory meal.

"That will stand me for the balance of the day," he said, tossing the cleanly picked carcass from him; then drinking freely from a nearby brook, and replenishing the water bottle which hung at his side, he continued his journey with renewed vigor, finally camping for the night on a mossy knoll, to be awakened at dawn by the song of a happy bird. He quickened his progress materially by adding a powerful horse to his equipments, and before a week had passed he was far on towards the completion of his journey.

"We must be more than half way to the Black Hills," he remarked to the beast, as they swung along. But he was farther west than he had guessed, for in three

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days he had reached the rolling prairies of southern Dakota, across which he must wend his way before the Black Hills could be reached.

"It's strange I haven't seen a redskin yet; and they told me these plains were full of them," he mused. "I suppose there is time enough for them to show themselves, though, without me troublin' myself. We may yet become better acquainted than is for my good. Now—it—can't be—possible—that—"

A hand shaded his keen eyes as he reined in his horse to a standstill. In the distance, towards the right, was what looked to the ordinary vision but a speck, but what, to the trained eye of the huntsman, appeared to be an object.

"An emigrant wagon: one horse standing, one down. Somebody is in trouble. Come, Billy, we must help them," but before the words had left his lips the report of a rifle split the air, followed by an unearthly yell, and he knew that the little company had been attacked by Indians.

Billy Wheeler was no coward, but his cool judgment prevented a rush to certain death, as present circumstances indicated. Cautiously he made his way toward the scene of the attack, hoping to be of some service to the wayfarers. A nearer view disclosed a band of twenty-five or thirty Indians, while the defenders consisted of but two men and three women.

"It is but another of the prairie horrors," he mut-

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tered. "The red devils hate the encroachment of the white man and are retaliating with deadly results. These emigrants will never realize their ambition, Heaven pity them. They will be wiped out, poor creatures. But are you going to sit here and see them women butchered, Bill Wheeler? Never, sir."

Giving the horse a free rein, he flew like the wind toward the massacre. He had covered perhaps half the distance, when an Indian pony carrying a brave dashed from his fellows, and hanging from the redskin's arm was the form of a woman. He had secured her as his prize and was making away with her, before his right should be disputed. Following, galloping, a moment later, came another pony and brave, bearing a similar burden. As the first pony careened towards Wheeler, he unslung his rifle and waited. He knew what the kidnapping meant to the women and determined to thwart at least one captor's purpose.

"I'll give your carcass to the fowls of the air, you reptile," he snarled and as the distance between them lessened, he took deliberate aim. A sharp report, a piercing yell, and, dropping his captive, the Indian fell from his pony, shot through the heart.

There was no time to lose. With all possible speed Wheeler galloped to where the woman lay, and grasping her in his strong arms, lifted her to the saddle, sprang on behind and sped away to the south. The other Indians, forgetful of all but their ghastly work, did

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not hear the report of their brother's cries as they mingled with their own yells. Nor had they seen the fearless rescuer who was now flying on and on, and who soon reached a friendly grove, through which he dashed, and fording a shallow stream on the opposite side, was soon out of immediate danger.

"You will be safer with me than with them reptiles," he said gently, as he drew rein after having wandered down stream a mile or more. "I would have rescued the other captive if it had been possible, but the Indian carried her north, while we came in a southerly direction. The third woman and the two men are dead. I saw the red demons tomahawk them."

"Poor mother, father and brother Edward," she sobbed. "Oh, it is terrible. They came upon us before we were aware of their presence. Only one shot was fired by father. He killed an Indian but was almost immediately tomahawked by a great brute, and then I felt myself lifted and carried away. Poor Letitia, she too was made a captive. But I fear her fate will be worse than death."

"Were you intending to settle in the West?"

"Yes. Father took a tract of land in northern Dakota, on the upper river; we were on our way to settle it."

"Did he buy it, or was it a Government grant?"

"He had bought it, and the deeds were in his possession. It was mostly woodland; he intended following

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his regular business of lumbering, as he knew there would be a great demand for building timber. He was out there a year ago and made a selection, including a survey of the land, coming to Illinois for the family. We had seen no Indians and were hoping for a safe journey, when we were so unexpectedly attacked."

"Then we must return and secure those deeds," said Wheeler calmly. "While regretting your terrible affliction, we must not forget that you are now alone in the world and must make the best of circumstances. Timber land will realize handsomely on the investment in a year or two as it is on the rise in the Dakotas. How many acres were in the tract?"

"Two thousand."

Wheeler gave a prolonged whistle. "I will go back at once, and if the bodies and wagon have not been burned, I am almost sure to find them. I will bring back whatever else is available, too, if I think it would be of use to you at present."

He slipped the bundle from his back, unfolded a rough blanket, and spreading it within a clump of thick bushes, bade her rest until his return, which would be, he said, with the least possible delay. Wheeler was not blinded to the comely appearance and lady-like bearing of the woman he had rescued; nor did her great courage with which she met the terrible ordeal, escape his notice. Yet true to his manly principles, he thought of his duty to her as a friend, in her great

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hour of need; and he did not hesitate to undertake a precarious return to the scene of the massacre, as it was for her future welfare. A perplexing question rose to his mind as he galloped back to where the bodies of the victims lay. He was alone in the prairies with a strange young woman, with no habitations in sight, no food, and surrounded by murderous Indians. Surely it was anything but a desirable situation. Still he lost no time in idle speculation, but knew he must figure out the best plan of strategy systematically; a plan that in his estimation would prove most beneficial to his suddenly acquired protegee. His own interests could be seen to at a later date, he reasoned.

Sarah Jones, for that was the rescued woman's name, could not have fallen into more generous hands. Her benefactor was an honorable man, kind and capable; he could do for her that which would put her in an easy financial way, as he had a good general idea of the boom that was just beginning in the region of her late father's possessions. For him to decide was to act; to act was to be invariably successful. In this case there was no chance for failure, should he succeed in finding the deeds and proving the daughter's identity. With keen, watchful eyes, he approached the scene of butchery and found the bodies lying where they had fallen; their pockets were emptied but the clothing was otherwise undisturbed. The wagons had been ransacked and articles of importance taken;

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but in a small receptacle under the seat, securely tied, were the deeds and eight hundred dollars in money.

"This is fortunate," he remarked with not a little satisfaction. "It is lucky for the girl the wagon wasn't fired. And here are some canned meats, tea and sugar. This is almost equal to the Swiss Family Robinson's stroke of luck," he chuckled. Then he found a bag and putting into it such things as would be most needful, laid it upon the horse's back.

A shovel lay near, under the wagon. "I'll bury the poor creatures as decently as circumstances will permit," he said, and immediately set about digging a grave for the three bodies. This was a comparatively easy task as the earth was pliable, and in a couple of hours all that was mortal of the once active forms was hidden beneath the sod. Then, standing beside the new-made grave, he uncovered his head, and with face raised heavenward, said fervently, "God of heaven, help me to do my duty to the one that is left."

Three hours from the time he left her,—hours that seemed days to the poor girl, Wheeler returned, reported what he had done, and placed the documents in her hands.

"But what am I to do with them?" she questioned helplessly.

"If you will permit me to act for you I will handle the property to the best advantage, and account for every transaction."

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"You are very kind, Mr. ——"

"My name is Wheeler—William Wheeler. I am from Vermont, and was on my way to the Black Hills regions."

"My father was Thomas Jones of ——, Illinois," she explained. "But is it not possible for me to get back to my old home, Mr. Wheeler? I see no reason for my staying in these regions. If the land can be disposed of, and you wish to take it in hand, I will appoint you my agent, with full power to act; and you may remit to me, taking from the proceeds your commission."

"But there are many miles to travel before we can reach civilization, Miss Jones," he replied. "Our first move must be north. But you are hungry," and taking from the bag a frying-pan, a tin teapot and a couple of tin cups, he set about preparing a meal for two. Nor would he permit her to assist in making ready the meal. "I am a good cook," he laughed, "and know just what to do."

In a remarkably short time he had a most relishable lunch ready for serving, consisting of warmed meat, toasted crackers, and several other savory dishes, that would have done credit to a cook of even greater experience.

As they concluded the meal, Wheeler drew from his pocket the great roll of bills and a box of silver coin. "The Indians were considerate enough to leave

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this for you," he said, placing the money in her hands.

"Oh, that was in the box under the seat, with the deed and description of the land," she cried, her pretty blue eyes brightening. "How kind you are." Then her eyes filled with tears. "I dare not think what would have become of me but for your brave rescue."

"We won't think of that now, Miss Jones," said Wheeler, rising from the log upon which they had been seated, and adjusting the enlarged pack to the horse-saddle. "We must reach some place of habitation as soon as possible, and then make plans for the future." He lifted her into the saddle and turned the horse's head towards the north, keeping up a pleasant conversation as he walked beside her.

Three days later they reached a small settlement in southern Dakota, and a week following saw them at Grand Forks, then a struggling village. Here all plans for future operations were completed, ample proof furnished of the rightful heir to the Jones property, and in three months a saw-mill had been erected,—an enterprise calling for their combined capital—and Sarah Jones became Mrs. William Wheeler, willingly.

After this wise and in this place was the foundation of the great Wheeler fortune laid; here the love of a devoted couple grew deeper and deeper with the advancing years, and the influence of their noble lives went out to influence scores of other settlers. From this tragic beginning started the wealthy Grand Forks

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Lumber Company, with its branches now spread out and appearing in the thriving towns of Fargo, Jamestown and Bismarck, with its adjacent woodlands, reaching to the river, down which millions of feet of lumber floated yearly, into the company's yards.

In the midst of her contented life, Mrs. Wheeler never forgot the sister so ruthlessly torn from her and repeated efforts were made to locate her, if alive, but without success.

"If I could but only know that she was happy or even dead, I think I would be satisfied," she told her husband. "But to imagine her the slave of a brutal Indian is unbearable."

In an inner drawer of her secretary, jealously guarded, were a gold locket and chain. Within the locket were two pictures—one of herself and the other of her sister Letitia. It was worn about Mrs. Wheeler's neck, when she, with her father, brothers and sister, had started on their fated journey, and a duplicate locket was worn by the lost sister. "It is all that remains of my dear ones," she would plaintively say to her sympathetic friends.

CHAPTER XII

A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE

Burlington, Vt., August 27, 18—

WILLIAM WHEELER, ESQ., Grand Forks, N. D.

My dear Sir: Kindly forward to me at your earliest convenience, the following board lumber, viz.:

Five carloads Northwestern White Oak.

Five carloads Northwestern Pine.

Three carloads Walnut.

Also ten carloads Red Cedar R. R. Sleepers.

The three former to be in the rough, and A1 lumber suited for interior finish. The latter, regulation length, and of best quality. Will remit check upon receipt of invoice and lumber.

Yours truly,

ROBERT GRANT.

For a few moments Mr. Wheeler pondered the order with interest. It was so characteristic of the sender,—without a superfluous word,—yet all that a strictly business transaction called for. But it meant prompt attention.

“I don’t suppose Robert Grant would add another word if his life depended upon it,” commented the lumberman, pressing an electric button on the wall

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at the side of his desk. "One thing is sure, he will never die from overwork in letter writing. He has the art of brevity boiled down to a science. But he is safe, which is more essential. I wonder how he thought to send me this order. It is the first time I have heard from him in five or six years. The Vermont lumber woods must have given out, or he is buying ahead to beat out some competitor. In any event he will win out; I never knew him to experience defeat in a business venture."

At that moment the yard foreman appeared, and Mr. Wheeler handed him the order.

"What has happened to Grant, that he has favored us again?" remarked the workman, looking the order over. "He has been giving us the go-by for five years or more."

"He is either laying in a stock for some special purpose, or has contracts which call for that particular kind of wood. As to the railroad sleepers, he is president of the Central Vermont, and consequently has a monopoly. But you will need to rush the order, as Grant is a stickler for promptness."

"We have but ten cars in the yard at present, and it is hard telling when we can get hold of more, there are so many out that are not due to return for two or three weeks. But I think there are several at Fargo and Bismarck. If you will telephone for them at once, we may be able to fill and get the order off in a couple of weeks."



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"I will attend to it at once, Ralston. In the meantime start Duffy with a gang, and load the oak first, following with the pine, which can be shipped as soon as the cars are filled. My son Thomas is at the Red River mill now. I will telegraph him to get the sleepers ready, and he can ship them from there. Have we walnut enough on hand to fill Grant's order?"

"Just about. But we are running shy on that wood, as the demand for the past year has been very heavy."

"That reminds me; I received word from Bismarck to-day to go light on walnut, as it is giving out all around. But we must fill this order at all hazards, and as quickly as possible. Put Duffy and his men on the oak first thing in the morning."

"Duffy has the trapping fever again, and I am not sure that I can hold him. He gave his annual notice last Saturday, and expects to start for the woods next Monday. He is like a fish out of water when away from the trails after the season opens."

"I wish that fellow would settle down," answered Mr. Wheeler. "He is one of the best men we have, if he would only give up these periodical tramps. But I realize something of the fascination, for I once followed the same occupation, in the woods of Vermont. If he is determined to go, of course we can't hold him; but you may ask him, as a special favor for me, to postpone his trip until we can get this order of Grant's out of the way."

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The foreman had returned to the yard, and Mr. Wheeler was busy with his correspondence, when a clerk entered from the outer office.

"A young gentleman to see you," and he laid a card upon the desk.

"Alexander Grant, Burlington, Vt.," half meditated the lumberman, as he inspected the neat white paste-board. "This is quite a coincidence; I have just handed Ralston an order from Robert Grant of the same place,— the first we have received in several years. I wonder if the young man was sent out here to hurry the order. But that is hardly possible, the distance is so great."

"I think he is in search of some one, as he asked if John Grant were employed here."

"You may show him in."

As the visitor entered, Mr. Wheeler gave a start, rose from his chair, and advanced with outstretched hand.

"John, how are you? I am glad you have come back. We have missed you greatly."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Wheeler," replied the young man, taking the proffered hand, "but I fear the identity is no nearer than that of cousin. I am looking for John Grant, son of Robert Grant, of Burlington, Vt. But I have been informed that no such person is or has been employed here."

A look of disappointment came over the lumberman's face. Then, scanning the visitor's countenance, he asked:

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"Are you related to Robert Grant?"

"I am his nephew."

"I am very glad to meet you, young man. Your uncle has long been a close friend of mine, and until lately one of my heaviest buyers. Only to-day I received an order from him, which I was pleased to get, for old times' sake, if nothing more."

"Very likely my cousin knows you by name and reputation, as he was head clerk in the Vermont office; but lumbering is not my line of business."

"Do you resemble the cousin referred to?"

"We are alike as twins."

"And you say his name was John?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your cousin has worked here. He was with us up to six months ago. He first applied for work as an ordinary man, and I sent him to Jamestown, where office hands were short; but owing to an unusual knowledge of the business, he was transferred to Fargo as head clerk under my oldest son. From there he was changed to this office, where he was of great value to us. I never felt more keenly the loss of an assistant. He did nearly all my private work, until I became really neglectful of my business, such was my confidence in him. I have often thought he sprung from something higher, but we never suspected he was the son of my old friend, as he went under the name of John Graham. For some reason he decided to leave us,

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and although I offered to add fifty dollars a month to his salary, we couldn't hold him."

"Money was no object to him; he is the only heir to an immense fortune. Have you any idea where he went?"

"He failed to enlighten us; but I learned that he bought a ticket for Duluth."

"I am very thankful for so much information," said Alex. "Duluth is on my route."

"Did Robert Grant send you in search of John?"

"Yes, sir; and I have travelled from Vermont to California and this far back. You have given me the first clue to his whereabouts."

"My opinion is that he has not gone very far; that is, more than a day's travel," suggested Mr. Wheeler.

"I believe he is somewhere within these north-western regions. The fact that he has worked here within six months is most encouraging, as it is more than likely that he is alive. Was he in good health at the time he left your employ?"

"Yes, he was quite robust. I never knew him to be ill a day. But how does it happen that he is away from home when he is needed so much in his father's business? Any trouble?"

"Simply a misunderstanding that can be readily adjusted if they can be brought together. Uncle Robert is, or has been, stern and sometimes tyrannical toward his subordinates, while John is just the opposite,

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and disposed to bestow privileges. They finally clashed, and rather than submit to what John considered a gross injustice, he resigned his position as head clerk and left the city. Uncle Robert has seen his error, repented, accorded the rights John advocated, and sent me out to find him. It is costing some money, but Robert Grant can bear the expense without feeling it."

"I should say so. He must be worth over two million," said Mr. Wheeler thoughtfully. "But I admire John's stand. He is the soul of honor, and has a great heart."

"My cousin is true to the core, and would even suffer an injustice rather than see a fellow-being wronged. He must be found, Mr. Wheeler, or Uncle Robert will die of grief. He now sees the need of John, not only in the business, but socially. I dare not return without him."

"I want you to find him; and to expedite the search I will try to arrange for a first-class guide and woodsman to accompany you. I have a man in the yard who is a professional trapper and huntsman; he is arranging to leave for the woods the first of next week. He is a veritable bushwhacker, and knows every logging camp and lumber yard between here and Michigan. I will try and induce Duffy to take up your search, as he is a safe man, and will guard you against many a mishap. The case is particularly

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interesting to me on account of my long acquaintance and friendship with your uncle, as well as a deep regard for the son."

"I appreciate your offer, Mr. Wheeler, and will gladly accept the services of an experienced woodsman. I have been seriously handicapped from the beginning of my search on account of ignorance of the forest trails."

Mr. Wheeler sent a young man for the prospective assistant, and a few moments later Duffy, a tall, raw-boned man of about forty, entered the private office. He was particularly loose-jointed in his walk, with a silent, sliding step characteristic of the huntsman; a brown beard finished the sunburnt face,—a face, by the way, unusually attractive, not because of its rugged beauty, but on account of the quiet, unpretentious expression of its depth of character. It was a face to inspire confidence, yet, as later developments manifested, dangerously stern when aroused to defensive action. A feeling of intense pleasure took possession of young Grant as he looked up into the bronzed face and noted the kind, yet keen eyes. He at once decided that this experienced woodsman should be engaged at any price within reason, and awaited anxiously the result of the interview with the lumberman.

"How would you like an extended vacation on full pay, Dennis?" asked Mr. Wheeler kindly, at the same time pointing to a chair. "This young gentleman

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is searching for a cousin, and I wish to assist him as far as possible. We have reason to believe that he is somewhere in the lumbering districts, and I have decided that you are the man to guide him. It may take a month, it may require more time; but I will make it an object for you to see him through."

"I've been calculating on looking after my traps for the next three months, and gave Ralston my notice to leave Saturday night," he said in a quiet voice. "But seeing it's for you, and in a good cause, and we will be in the woods anyhow, it don't make much difference. The trail is the trail to me this time of the year, whether it's trappin' game or huntin' up lost folks. You've been powerful good to me, Mr. Wheeler, and as I hain't never had no chance to show my real feelings, you can count on Den Duffy to see this job through. When do we start?"

"Mr. Grant will be a guest at my house for a week," replied Mr. Wheeler, much pleased with Duffy's willingness to take up the hunt. "You can make all arrangements with him there."

"But I can scarcely afford the time, Mr. Wheeler," said Alex. "Your information has so buoyed me up that I am anxious to be moving. I am sure Mr. Duffy and I will get on admirably. His knowledge of the woods will more than double the speed I have been making."

"It is necessary that you should rest, my boy," was

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the decisive answer. "I see that you are thoroughly tired. You will need all your reserve strength to follow Duffy. My wife and daughter will be delighted to entertain you. Eastern society is somewhat scarce in this region, you know."

"It's a hard route we have before us," said Duffy, addressing his new master. "A week's rest won't do you no harm. We'll talk it over and get our bearings. I know the woods middlin' well, but it won't do no harm to have an understanding."

"You may tell Ralston that I have concluded to let you off," said Mr. Wheeler, at the end of the interview. "But say nothing of the search in which you are to take a part. I wish it to be kept a secret."

"Den Duffy knows how to hold a secret," and rising, he left the office, apparently well pleased with the project in hand.

The lumberman pressed a button, and a few moments later a swift-stepping horse, attached to a business buggy, appeared at the door.

"I can't understand John's going from us, and most of all, his continued silence," said young Grant's host, as they drove towards the town's suburbs. "He should at least let us know where he is."

"I can readily understand his motive," replied Grant. "John is determined to give his father a life-long lesson. None of us have heard from him since he left home. He probably learned that you were an

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intimate friend of Uncle Robert, and feared some inquiry might be made about him." Then Alex explained the trouble in detail, placing his cousin in a true light, and upholding the justice of his stand.

"Robert Grant was wrong,—dead wrong," was the energetic reply. "I am surprised that he should take such a course, and with his own son of all others. I admire the boy's grit. It has raised him one hundred per cent in my estimation. I don't mind telling you that he is engaged to my daughter. She is nearly heart-broken over his neglecting to write. I was willing he should have her even as a dependent upon his salary, for my estimation of his manly qualities was very high. I had intended, when they married, to take him into the firm, but your information has put me all at sea. I had not counted on his being the son of my old friend, who could buy me out twice over."

"I can understand the cause of his delay in writing, and will satisfactorily explain it to your daughter," said Alex, as they turned from the highway into a beautiful park-like place. "And I will also make John account for his ungallant conduct when I find him."

"I wish you would put her mind at rest, Grant, for the poor girl is not at all herself," said Mr. Wheeler, throwing the reins to an attendant as they stopped at the doorstep of an artistically built residence, and grasping Alex's baggage he sprang nimbly from the

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wagon and ascended the stone steps. "Come right in, my boy. This is to be your home for a week and as much longer as you wish to stay. Step into the reception room while I find my wife and Alice," and he motioned to a door at the right of the hallway.

As he entered the room a glad voice cried, "Oh, John, John. You have come at last," and a vision of loveliness rushed to him, a pair of soft arms were thrown about his neck, and two passionate kisses pressed to his lips. "Why did you stay away so long, dear?" asked a sweet voice. "Did you not know I was waiting for you? Oh, John," and she drew him closer in a loving embrace.

For a moment only did Alex allow her to hold him, then in a low, doubtful voice he said, "I wish I were John for your sake, but I am only his cousin."

"And you are not my John?" she cried, instantly releasing him and stepping backward. "Oh, are you not John Graham?"

"I am Alex Grant, John Grant's cousin, and"—but the words were unfinished, for the girl had turned deathly pale, staggered and would have fallen but for his catching her in his arms. He carried her gently to a reclining chair and had placed her in it, when Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler entered the room. As he turned his face towards them Mrs. Wheeler gave a start, then looked searchingly into his face. The resemblance was perfect and she could scarcely con-

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vince herself that the stranger was not he who had become so dear to them.

"Mr. Grant, my wife. This is John's cousin, Sarah," said Mr. Wheeler. Mechanically she extended her hand, but could not speak. Alex understood the strain on her heart and his sympathy was sincere and deep. Mrs. Wheeler was a well-preserved woman of about fifty-five. She was quite tall, rather stout, but well-proportioned; the expression of her still youthful face was, like that of her husband, one of unusual benevolence. The blue eyes were full of love and as young Grant looked into them he knew he had met a staunch friend.

"It was a terrible shock to the poor girl," he said.

"Alice has been unable to account for her fiance's silence and now this further disappointment has quite overcome her," said Mrs. Wheeler. "But come; I am sure all will be explained and I am so glad that you, perhaps, can help in that."

At that moment the young lady recovered consciousness and was at once assisted to her room by her mother.

"John Graham—or Grant, must be found," said the lumberman, in a decided voice, laying his hand on Alex's shoulder.

"By the grace of God and with all my energies, he shall be," was the fervent response.

When they retired that night, at a late hour, Mr. and

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Mrs. Wheeler had been made familiar with the circumstances of John's disappearance from home; nor could they do other than praise the manly course he had pursued. They now understood his silence and felt that with the assistance of Duffy's great experience and knowledge of the forest trails he would soon be found and returned to his sorrowing friends.

Miss Wheeler did not appear again during the evening, as she was too weakened from the shock to face the unconscious cause of it again. Thrilled with a new hope for success and thankful for the friends so providentially given him, Alex Grant, for the first time in many a night, found himself between the snowy sheets of a downy bed and scarce had his head touched the pillow when he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIII

ALICE WHEELER

IN RESPONSE to a light, nervous rap upon the library door, Alex Grant called cordially, "Come in."

It was a beautiful picture that met his eyes as he rose to greet the visitor. With one hand upon the door-knob, cheeks flushed, breath slightly quickened, her deep blue eyes fixed intently upon his handsome face, Alice Wheeler stood studying the features of her parents' guest.

She was a remarkably pretty girl of about twenty-two, slightly above the average height, superbly formed, with exquisitely molded features, of reddish complexion, and light-brown hair. There was a combination of cheerfulness, stability and unfathomable love written upon her countenance which not only commanded attention and respect, but immediately drew out one's better nature. She was a creditable product of the West, the pride of a devoted father, the loving companion of her mother, and the idol of all the attendants. Alex did not wonder that John had fallen in love with his employer's beautiful daughter. Since the parting at San Francisco he had met with no one to be compared with this gem of the Dakotas.

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As he stood beside the table at which he had been writing, a deep blush came to his face as his eyes met hers.

"I wish to apologize for my demonstration of yesterday, Mr. Grant," she said in a low, trembling voice. "The thought of what you must think of my act continues to humiliate me beyond expression."

"Then please bid your humiliation depart," replied Grant, smiling, as he took her hand. "Under the circumstances your greeting was quite right. I resemble my cousin closely, I know."

"You are the very image of John, and when you entered I supposed, of course, it was he. But oh, Mr. Grant, the shock was terrible. I never fainted before," she said as she took a chair facing him.

"I can readily understand your feelings, Miss Wheeler, and deeply regret your disappointment. You are not the only one who feels John's absence. For over sixteen months I have been searching for him, travelling from Vermont to California, and am now making my return trip through the Northwest. I received from your father the first encouraging news of him. He has so thoroughly hidden himself from all of us that he is as one dead. His father is nearly distracted, and the rest of us are perplexed."

"But why does he not write? Surely he must know how we all worry about him."

"His reasons are obvious. He found that your

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father was an intimate acquaintance of his father, and fearing discovery, left. But if John knew how thoroughly his father's will-power had been subdued he would not hesitate to make his whereabouts known, or return home and take his proper place in Robert Grant's immense business."

"I do not quite understand you. Who is Robert Grant?"

"Robert Grant is a wealthy lumber merchant of Burlington, Vt., and one of your father's most extensive customers. He is also my uncle, and the father of John Grant, who has been masquerading as John Graham. John knows if he wrote to you, your father, having discovered his identity, would acquaint my uncle with his runaway son's whereabouts, which is not my worthy cousin's wish at present."

"Then Graham is not *my* John's true name?"

"His name is John Grant, and his father is worth nearly, if not quite, two million."

"But why did he run away?"

"First, to teach his father a needful lesson; second, to find a suitable wife," laughed Alex, and bowing profoundly.

"Please be explicit, Mr. Grant. This is an important question to me. If John Graham—or Grant, as you are pleased to call him, is not what he represents, much as I love him, he shall be cast off," said the young lady, seriously. "To me honor is honor, and

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the man I marry must be above reproach. He won my love as a clerk in my father's office, with only his salary to depend upon. To me he has ever been a king among men. Though retiring in his nature, he had innumerable opportunities to select a sweetheart, and I was his preference. True, I never inquired into his past; his handsome, honest countenance and gentlemanly conduct were a sufficient guarantee of his integrity. He never volunteered information regarding himself, other than that his father lived in the East and his mother was dead. I trusted him, I loved him; my whole life is still bound up in him. Shortly before going away he asked me to be his wife, and I promised. He said he would be absent for a time, but would return. Now, you represent him as a runaway, a fugitive from justice, as it were, going from place to place to avoid identification. What am I to think?" and great tears rolled down her cheeks as she sat looking pleadingly into Alex's face.

"Just keep on thinking him the best and handsomest fellow on earth. (I take that remark of yours as a personal compliment, for we are alike as two peas.) Don't budge a hair's-breadth in your opinion of him. He'd run the gauntlet of a thousand Apaches to get back to you, for John Grant's love, once given, will last forever. I know him of old. We were kids together, school-boys together, and young men together. We were inseparable. They called us the Grant twins.

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The only difference between us was that he believed in peace and I advocated war. We were distinguished only by our attitudes—when I was punching some unfortunate, as though my reputation for fighting depended upon it, and he was acting as peacemaker. I have licked more fellows for John's sake than you have fingers and toes. I've always been willing to give up the ghost for that cousin of mine, and I'll never rest till I find him."

"You don't look *very* dangerous," said Alice, laughing through her tears at his reference to their boyhood escapades. Alex had set out to draw the sorrowing girl into a more cheerful frame of mind, and was succeeding admirably. "But what made him leave home, Mr. Grant?"

"Call me *Alex*, if you'd just as soon, Miss Wheeler. I have a parent, and he's *Mr.* Grant. Above all nuisances I dislike formalities."

"Well,—'Alex,' then, if that will suit you any better," she replied, half saucily. "But please tell me all about John, and don't leave out *one* sentence."

Then he told her how John had commenced as an ordinary errand boy, risen to lumber-measurer, been taken into the office as junior clerk, worked himself up step by step, until he had reached the position of head clerk through sheer merit, and been given control of the large office and yard force. His sympathies were with the employees, who, though liberally paid, suffered

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at times unjustly, from over-drawn discipline established by the head of the firm. John had frequently attempted to lighten the yoke, and held several sessions with his father in the interest of the men, who, he claimed, would work more freely, and take greater interest if treated more considerately; but to no purpose. The rules of the past were sufficient for the future, and no change would be made. John himself had suffered loss through no fault of his own, and finally, when an unjust deduction was made in his own salary, he resigned and left the city, willing to rough it rather than be a party to such tyranny. From that day to the present he had not been heard from.

"And John, *my* John, preferred the life of a wanderer rather than be a part of such a system. He has cast aside the fortune that is his by right, that he might be free in his own conscience?" said Alice, her sweet face glowing with love and pride.

"That is about the extent of it, to say nothing of the weary tramp I've undergone through lumber yards and logging camps, swamps and marshes in search of his lordship. John Grant and I will have a summing-up when I find him, and it won't be with the pipe of peace, either," said Alex, with his usual spirit. "I'm going to buy a policeman's kit; I'll handcuff him; I'll shackle him, and lead him in humility and disgrace to his heart-broken father."

"You must find him, Alex Grant, and bring him

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to *me*," commanded Alice, warningly.

"But Uncle Robert commands that I stand the culprit before *him*," laughed Grant. "Perhaps it might be well to follow King Solomon's suggestion and 'split him in halves'!"

"I have a higher title on the grounds of a promised wife," persisted Alice.

"And Uncle Robert will levy a replevin on the plea of wrongfully retaining property. He held possession before you ever knew there was such a person as John Grant."

"Cannot we compromise?" she suggested, laughing—willing to effect a settlement.

"We might," answered Grant, gravely. "I intend to tax Uncle Robert one hundred thousand dollars for finding his son. I'll deliver him to you for fifty thousand, and——"

"You may make it cash on delivery," she put in.

"And then I'll present you both to Uncle Robert and collect fifty thousand on you as one of the matched colts. Later I'll sail for Europe and enjoy a long vacation on the proceeds."

"Will you go by the way of Alabama and take your bride with you?"

Alex looked at her, and Alice, who was lighter of heart than she had been for weeks, gave way to a ripple of laughter.

"Were you a listener last evening?"

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"Oh, no; but I found two California papers in the sitting-room this morning. They contained a very interesting account of a scene in a San Francisco hotel. You must be a horrid fighter, Alex Grant," but her twinkling eyes gave evidence of a far different opinion.

"My birth and nature call for a free and easy experience wherever I go, without interference from swindlers and blackmailers."

"There is no doubt of your freedom—with your fists. But I question your being very easy," added Alice, looking admiringly at his perfect form.

"Miss Whiting was a charming young woman, alone in a strange city. I could not allow her character to be smirched by a villain."

"All of which she doubtless appreciated, and loved you the more," said the young lady mischievously. "No doubt an extended visit to her home would be highly pleasing to—to you both."

"Shall I start before finding John?"

"Indeed you shall not. I will see that you and Dennis are packed off at the end of your week's rest. Not even a trip to your lady-love shall cause a delay in the search."

A light rap sounded on the door, and Mrs. Wheeler's voice asked,

"May I come in?"

"Yes, indeed, Mother; we shall be glad of your company," answered Alice, hastily opening the door.

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"Alex has been telling me all about John, whose name is not Graham at all, but Grant. I am so glad for this interview, Mother, for it has put my heart at rest. Alex is sure John will return or come back with him."

"It is all so strange," said Mrs. Wheeler, greatly pleased at the change in her daughter's spirits. "Had we only known who he was it might have been so different. Yet I admire him the more for his exhibition of true, humane principle. I am sure it will end happily for all concerned."

"Heaven grant that it may," said Alex earnestly.

A laughing cry from Miss Wheeler, who was looking through the window, drew the attention of her companions.

"That everlasting speckled bronco will cause father trouble yet. See him racing across the pasture trying to reach those two Indians who are coming peacefully down the road. There is something peculiar about that animal's disposition. He is quite tractable with white people, but an Indian he despises. This is his third exhibition of antipathy to the copper-skinned race."

Alex could but laugh at the attitude of the pinto, a rangy animal possessing remarkable speed, but lacking equine beauty. His ears were laid back, his mouth was wide open, and he was making frantic efforts to clear the high fence, his failure to accomplish the feat

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alone saving the Indians from bodily harm.

"My husband took him in trade some months ago," explained Mrs. Wheeler. "He is a fine saddle beast, and Alice thought she had a treasure until he carried her at terrific speed through the business portion of our town in a chase with two mounted Indians, who only escaped by springing from their ponies and seeking refuge in a barn. Many of them know the bronco, and call him the 'speckled devil.' Mr. Wheeler has tried to get rid of him, but it is impossible. His reputation is too well known."

"I will buy him, Mrs. Wheeler," said Alex. "If Duffy and I should have a disagreement with the Indians on our trail he may prove of great assistance. I would rather fight ten Indians than a vicious horse."

"I have no doubt my husband will gladly give him to you," she replied.

When the Indians had passed beyond his reach the bronco quietly returned to the centre of the pasture, from where his fellows had been watching the attempted assault.

"But the northern Indians are quite peaceful, are they not?" queried Miss Wheeler in a slightly anxious voice. "It is several years since there was an uprising in this part of the country."

"I have no doubt we shall get through without serious difficulty, unless that 'speckled devil' starts on the warpath," said Alex.

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He little knew how soon he would have need of the services of the animal under discussion,—how the bronco's timely charge upon a band of hostile Sioux would deliver him from one of the most critical moments of his life.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SEARCH RESUMED

TEN DAYS had passed, and everything was in readiness to resume the search for John Grant. Alice had been much interested in the arrangements, and added several conveniences to Alex's outfit, which she surmised would be pleasing to the young man. In spite of their disputes, which proved frequent and amusing, the two young people had become firm friends. His rollicking disposition had been the means of completely restoring her depressed spirits, and in return she bestowed upon him her lasting friendship. She had faith in his expressed determination to locate the lost cousin, and felt that he would never give up the search until the mission had been completed, either in returning him to those who were anxiously awaiting his coming, or obtaining such information as would render further search fruitless. To Mrs. Wheeler he had become as a son.

"We shall expect to hear from you often," she said as they waited the coming of the horses to the door. "We shall want to know how you are progressing, even if success does not come as soon as you hope."

"I have put a lot of stamped envelopes in your

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pack, all addressed to myself; so you will only need to scribble on the paper and drop it in the nearest post-office," said Alice in a sisterly voice. "You know I am an interested party, and anxious to obtain all possible information."

"I shall keep you posted," he replied. "Duffy says we shall have miles of dense forest to traverse, and occasionally may find it necessary to depend on game for our food. But he knows the route, and I have no fears as to our ultimate success."

"If those woodsmen begin on you, Grant, just keep cool until you locate the ringleader, then lay him out, and do it quick; I guess you are capable," said Mr. Wheeler, with a knowing smile. "There is a bully in every camp, and he has to be thrashed before the rest of the gang can be brought to order. You can depend on Duffy to back you."

"I reckon old Den will be on hand when it comes to a scrap," put in Duffy modestly. "I know every trick of them fellers, as some of them have reason to remember. If it's fight, why, we'll fight with our backs to the wall, and I reckon two scienced fellers is good for about ten apiece."

Alex looked at his loose-jointed comrade, and decided there was more to him than appeared on the surface,—a decision that proved true some days later.

Shortly after daybreak the horses, with packs, blankets and necessary equipments for a prolonged journey

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firmly adjusted, arrived at the door. Alice had presented Alex with her own outing bag, having personally placed the strap over his shoulder, making it just the proper length, so that the bag with its tasty edibles, all provided by her own hands, would rest at the right side of his body, while Duffy slung his old liberal lunch receptacle over his shoulder without feminine assistance.

"Remember a mother's love, and return to us as soon as possible," said Mrs. Wheeler as they stood in the hallway. "We have every confidence in the ability of you and Dennis to bring John home. Now, good-bye, and may God be with you every step of the way." Then, putting her motherly arms about his neck, she kissed him affectionately.

For a moment Alice stood undecided, then, going quickly to him, put her hands upon his shoulders, and looked tenderly into his face. "You will bring John back, won't you, Alex? And—please take him this,—” and she raised her red lips.

"God bless and keep you courageous," he said with a tremor in his voice as he accepted the caress.

"Good-bye, my boy," said Mr. Wheeler, as they were about to mount. "Look out for snags. I leave you in Duffy's hands, who is familiar with all the trails. Duffy, I hold you responsible for Grant's return."

"He'll come back all right," answered Duffy cheerfully, and swinging a long leg over the back of his

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horse, the woodsman turned in the direction of the highway, his young master closely following. In a few moments they were out of sight.

For the first twenty-five miles rapid headway was made, the travellers skirting the state line and reaching Warren, Minnesota, at ten o'clock. Thence twenty miles farther to the hamlet of Gratzek, where they arrived shortly after twelve, as hungry as only hearty men and beasts can be.

"A good beginning," essayed Duffy, dismounting at the door of an unpretentious inn. Here the horses were barned and fed, their own appetites fully satisfied, and an hour's rest enjoyed, during which Duffy's time was fully occupied with a liberal-sized pipe.

At six o'clock the pretty little village of Hallock was reached, where they were to remain for the night.

"I didn't want to say anything at Wheeler's that would set the women folks worrying, for I seen they took a great notion to you, but now that we are on the way I want to put you on your guard. We are going through one of the hardest lumbering districts in the Northwest. It's full of cut-throats and thieves who are hiding from the law, and going through every pocket they can find, if they have to use the knife. They drive out every decent feller that won't become one of them, and it has got so that they come pretty nigh running the entire camps. As a whole, the bosses are pretty good fellers, but when a rumpus starts in

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they are powerless. I don't much think your cousin is this side of Round Lake, as he is more likely to be in one of the lumber offices. But as this route is a short cut, we will run the risk for the sake of time. They'll probably pick on you, but don't show the white feather. Hold your own agin any of them, and if it comes to a scrap, I'll take a hand, and I guess something will happen. I've been through these woods a good many times, and know the ropes. We'll stop at the camps when we can, and trust to luck and the Almighty to pull out. But remember this, Alex, Den Duffy will pull you through if it takes every drop of blood in his carcass." As he ceased speaking, Duffy laid his hand on his young friend's shoulder, and looked him in the eyes. "This hunt means a good deal to you," he continued, "you can't afford to fail. That girl of Wheeler's will die if her feller don't come back. And she's too good a girl to be fooled with. I don't know anything about his father, and I don't know as I care much. But Wheeler has been a good friend to me, and anything that belongs to him is sacred with Den Duffy. She wants that cousin of yours, and she shall have him, if there is any virtue in me. If he don't come back with us we'll leave his carcass for the crows to feed on." His tone was terribly earnest, and Alex for the first time realized the depth of affection he entertained for the Wheeler family.

"I don't think John will hesitate to come back when

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he understands the change in his father. It is a matter of principle with my cousin, and he will never change the course he has taken. John will stand for the right with his life; but his love is equally as deep. If he has made a promise to Alice Wheeler he will keep it. But like yourself, I am anxious to bring them together for her sake. She will please my uncle immensely, and the home he will provide John will have no equal in our state. It only remains for us to do our best; and unless John is dead there will be untold happiness in Robert Grant's heart before the snow comes again."

Duffy laid aside his pipe, threw himself into bed, and almost as soon as his head had touched the pillow was sleeping the musical sleep of the just but wearied traveller.

CHAPTER XV

THE FOREST FLOWER

THIRTY miles had been traversed on the following morning, when an Indian village was sighted at the upper end of Roseau county, near the Canadian line. It was Alex's first visit to the home of the redskin, and his pulse quickened as he suddenly looked down upon the wigwams from an elevation at the border of a clearing. Often had he read of the dusky warriors and their escapades; the hairbreadth escapes of white settlers, and the terrific hand-to-hand encounters when an assault was made. Times without number had he been thrilled with accounts of periodical uprisings, followed by wholesale butchery; of women and children forced to take the trail as prisoners, to experience a living death, while husbands and fathers, with hearts afire and muskets primed, stealthily followed, only to be ambushed, killed on the spot, or later bound at the stake. With awe had he dwelt upon the bravery and dash of Buffalo Bill, of Custer and other celebrities; become entranced with the love of a chieftain's matchless daughter for the handsome captive,—later to liberate and go with him to the home of the pale-face; running the gauntlet and other almost impossible feats

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as the price of freedom. But to rest his eyes upon the scene of such barbarities without a moment's warning, sent the blood coursing through his veins.

His interest was intense as he sat upon the variegated bronco and gazed down upon the hundred or more tents, watching the varied occupation of women and children, while the men lay about in groups, with here and there one possessing sufficient ambition to clean his hunting equipments. He had no doubt of the friendliness of the tribe to pale-face visitors, yet the reality, the very experience of meeting them upon their own territory, almost took the young man's breath from him. Motionless as a statue he sat, taking in every movement of the people before him, and was only reminded that time awaits no man by an exclamation from Duffy.

"We'll move on, if you are ready, Alex. We've got to reach that logging camp before night."

"Are you going through this Indian Village?" asked Grant.

"I don't see any occasion for going around it. I've been here before."

As they descended and made their way between the rows of tents, a howl went up from several mongrel dogs, followed by the appearance of two dozen or more squaws at as many wigwam openings. Some of them were fairly prepossessing, others, more or less swarthy, while three or four held papposes midway

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over their shoulders.

"Keep your eyes open and say nothing," cautioned Duffy in a low voice. "If they speak, just nod and smile. They like to be noticed."

For a wonder, the speckled devil was on his good behavior, owing, perhaps, to the continuous exercise of the past few days, and kept steadily on the trail of Duffy's mount, exhibiting no disposition to bolt. At the extreme end of the row, and slightly apart from the others, stood a large tent of superior quality, about which were further indications that it was the dwelling place of the chief. In the opening stood as perfect a specimen of young womanhood as one could wish to meet. A magnificent form, quite tall, straight and plump. An arm exposed nearly to the elbow, with just enough of the brownish hue to give it a healthy appearance. A short skirt revealed two exquisitely moulded ankles and slim, moccasined feet. Her face was one which a Bonnat or a Constant would rave over and the russet tint of her skin could only be caught by a Henner. The glowing, melting tints and perfectly chiseled features were further enhanced by laughing black eyes, beautiful red lips and a graceful liteness of the body that held Grant in absolute admiration. A mass of dark hair was piled on the crown of her head and a bright ribbon bow gave a gay touch to it. Her beauty stood out the more keenly because of no other adornments. She seemed so out

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of place in her wild setting that it caused a shudder to pass through Alex's whole being. There was an intelligence, a charm, a grace which gave evidence of white blood—and this did not escape the close scrutiny of Grant's sharp eyes. The attraction was evidently mutual, for as the rider smiled and raised his hat the maiden advanced towards him, saying in quaint, broken English:

"Pale-face welcome," indicating, as Duffy later explained, a desire for acquaintance—a favor bestowed only upon those to whom the speaker is especially attracted. Instantly Grant drew rein, dismounted, and clasped the extended hand.

"Pale-face come from far?" she asked in a low, musical voice.

"Yes, from the East, many miles away," he answered softly, returning her admiring glance.

"Pale-face go far?"

"Many, many miles."

"Pale-face come back this way?"

"Yes," hardly knowing what he said.

"Good," she commented with a satisfied smile.

"When pale-face come back, he take Tallasse away, far away from Indian village. No home here for Tallasse." Her words were so appealing, so pathetic, that the traveller at once surmised a substantial cause was at the bottom of her desire.

"Do you wish to go out into the world?" he asked gently.

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"Yes, yes. Tallasse lonely here. She want to be with pale-face sister. Tallasse mother pale-face. She tell Tallasse leave here, go into world, learn much, be good woman."

Then she asked him many questions concerning the outside world. Were the people nice? did the women wear pretty clothes? did the great chiefs whip daughters and compel them to marry against their wish? Her questions were eager, expressing a longing for more congenial relations,—a wish to shake off the shackles of ignorance by a flight to the realm of learning, where her craving for the civilized life could drink to its full those treasures which present conditions forbade.

Carefully did Alex answer all her inquiries, relating many things she had never dreamed of, causing her bright eyes to open wide, and her bosom to heave with anticipation. Her breath came and went quickly as he talked to her kindly, and a great desire arose in his own noble heart to help this flower of the forest; to put her in the way of gratifying the longing for better things.

"Can you read?"

"Little."

"Have you books?"

She held up two fingers.

"Would you like to go to school, learn to read, write, sing, play music?"

"Oh, so much," and she clasped her hands firmly

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on his arm.

"Who is your father?"

"Great chief Wabana. Gone on hunt."

"Your mother?"

She pointed upward.

"Would Wabana let you go?"

A little shake of the head. "Want Tallasse marry warrior."

"And you do not want to marry warrior?"

"No, no," she cried with a shudder. "Him bad. Him whip Tallasse. Him want pale-face scalps. Tallasse love pale-face."

"Would you like to live with the pale-face?"

"Yes, yes. So much."

"Will you go to my friends?" It was a desperate move, but Grant's heart was deeply touched, which meant a resolve to liberate the beautiful girl, who, he felt sure, was purposely hidden and possibly watched.

"Tallasse no money."

"If I give you money?"

"Yes, yes," and her eyes fairly danced with delight.

"Have you ever been away from here?" Then fearing she did not understand, "Do you go away sometimes?"

"To Hallock," she answered readily, holding up four fingers.

"Can you find Hallock alone? It is thirty miles from here."

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"Yes, yes. Tallasse not forget."

Taking from a section of his pack an envelope and paper, he wrote rapidly. Then enclosing the letter pencilled a second short note which he addressed to the station agent at Hallock.

"Give this to the station agent at Hallock," he said, handing the note to Tallasse. "He will direct you. Buy a ticket for Grand Forks, North Dakota. Can you remember?"

"Yes, yes. Tallasse never forget."

"When you arrive at Grand Forks, go to the house of William Wheeler. He is a good man, and my friend. Ask the station agent at Grand Forks to send you in a carriage. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes. Tallasse understand all pale-face say. Tallasse never forget."

"Good; when you arrive at Mr. Wheeler's house give this to his daughter Alice. She is good and beautiful. She will love Tallasse, and teach her to read, and write, and sing, and play on the piano. She will give Tallasse pretty dresses, and shoes, and nice things. By and by I will come back, and see Tallasse there. Tell Alice that Alex Grant sent you. Will you remember my name?"

"Yes, yes. Alex Grant. Pretty name."

He took two five-dollar bills from his pocket and put them in her hand. "There is money. Go to Hallock. Give note to ticket agent. Buy a ticket to Grand Forks.

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Get on train station agent shows you. Ask conductor to tell you right road to Grand Forks. Tell station agent at Grand Forks to send you in a carriage to William Wheeler's house. Give letter to Alice Wheeler, and you will be her sister. Her mother will love Tallasse, too. You will ride in a nice carriage, go to church, and live like good, pale-face people."

"Pale-face Alex Grant good to Tallasse. She trust him. She go."

"Tell me, how will you go?" asked Grant.

"Tallasse go to Hallock, give little letter to man at station. He tell me all. Buy ticket, get on train he show me. Ask conductor, he show me train to Grand Forks. Man at Grand Forks station send me in carriage to William Wheeler house. Give letter to Alice Wheeler. Tell her Alex Grant send Tallasse. She give me home, and be nice sister. Her mother love Tallasse. Oh, Tallasse so glad. Tallasse so happy. Tallasse have pretty dresses. Tallasse be good for Alex Grant's sake. Tallasse wait for Alex Grant. Tallasse pray great moon bring him back soon. No one hurt him. Great moon keep him safe." Then, putting her hands upon his shoulders, she whispered in his ear, "Tallasse go to-night." Before he was aware of an intended caress, her lips had met his in a kiss of gratitude and she was bounding back to the wigwam. Her quick eye had seen a dark object lurking near, and she knew the interview must close.

LETITIA

There were tears in Grant's eyes when he mounted his horse and followed Duffy along the winding trail. His heart was full, but his conscience was at rest. He felt there was a bright future for the fair though ignorant girl. He could not think of leaving her to become the unwilling slave of a brutal warrior. He knew her reception at the Wheelers' would be of a royal nature; Alice's great heart would go out in love to the beautiful child of the forest; and as for Mrs. Wheeler,—he smiled at the imagined greeting that would be given the new-comer when she knew at whose bidding she had come.

For three hours the horses travelled slowly over the beaten path, when axes were heard, and shortly an opening in the woods was reached, revealing a logging camp in full operation.

"Hey, there. Look at the cow a-comin'. And it's a mooly; hain't got no horns."

Instantly every axe was lowered and a howl of laughter followed.

"Say, bub, can't yer afford a hoss? What's the use of riding that tarnal consarn?"

Grant took no notice of the insinuations, but followed Duffy towards a large board building on the opposite side of the clearing.

"Dat tam ting look like wild hox," said a little Frenchman, loud enough for the rider to hear.

"There hain't no ox about that animile," put in

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another. "It's a giraffe with its neck shortened. You never seen an ox with sech long legs."

Presently Duffy drew rein at the shanty door and inquired for the camp boss.

"Hello, Finch," he exclaimed as a large, good-natured man appeared. "We are looking for a bunk. Can you accommodate us for the night?"

"I reckon we can," was the cordial reply. "Just take your horses over to the barn and stall them. I'll see that they are properly looked after. But fetch all your valuables to my office. This house is not responsible for anything outside the safe," he concluded with a laugh.

"It seems good to see you again, Duffy. Where do you come from this time?" asked Finch, when the travellers had returned from the barn.

"From Grand Forks. I'm working for Wheeler now," and he presented Grant to the old friend and camp comrade of former days.

"You are welcome, Duffy,—you and the young gentleman," and he conducted them to his own apartment in the shanty.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE LUMBER WOODS

OWING to his youthful appearance and neat attire, it was not surprising that young Grant should be selected as a subject for amusement before the evening was over. From the first he was taken for a tenderfoot seeking recreation under the protection and guidance of an experienced bushwhacker,—some Easterner with more money than pluck, and while but few insinuating remarks were made at the supper-table, it was evident, from the side glances and winks, that a plan was afoot to draw on the visitor's courage and make him the laughing-stock of the camp. The little Frenchman, on the alert for sly mischief, seemed to be the leader, and while no seeming attention was paid to his comical sayings, Alex soon decided that he would be the one to set the ball rolling. Nor was he mistaken. As the workmen, about fifty in number, rose from the two long tables, this particular individual made his way to where Grant stood in conversation with Finch, and appearing to stumble, knocked against the guest with considerable force, sending him sideways to the partition, two or three feet away.

"No more of that, Guiette," said Finch sharply;

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but the reprimand was greeted with a half sneer, followed by a titter from the others as they congregated in an adjoining room for the usual evening games, a few going out to the yard, where they were presently puffing their black pipes.

Soon discussions and profanity were freely exchanged as the amusements progressed, and now and then outbreaks over attempts at cheating were threatened, but passed off without serious results. It was all very interesting to Alex, who entered the recreation room later on, but took no part in the games. The room had become almost stifling with tobacco smoke as they spun their yarns, dealt the cards, and handled the dominoes or checkers. One bold chap attempted a trick on Grant, but was checked by Finch, who, himself a powerfully built man, usually had control of his subordinates.

Presently the Frenchman approached Alex and asked him to take part in the games, but was politely refused.

"You don't tink you better tan us?" he said hotly.

"Not at all," replied Grant quietly. "But I don't care to take part."

"I bet five dollar I trow you down two time in tree," was the next sally.

"We won't indulge in that sport either," said Grant with a little laugh.

"You no good. I trow tree like you," and the impudent fellow spit at him. Then before Grant was

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aware of the next move, he had been grasped by the arms, tripped, and laid flat on his back. It was very prettily done, and showed the extreme suppleness of the foreigner.

A roar of laughter followed, drawing together the entire camp.

Without a word the young Vermonter rose to his feet, coolly divested himself of coat and vest, which he handed to Duffy, and faced his opponent. For a moment there was deathlike silence as the two wrestlers struggled for the mastery. Then with a quick movement Alex swung the Frenchman over his hip, laying him squarely on his back.

Finch and Duffy said not a word, but their surprise and pleasure were evident. Nor was there a word of comment on the part of the others. The fall nettled the Frenchman, for his reputation as a wrestler was known to many outside the immediate camp. Nothing daunted, he rose and again grappled his adversary with an energy that bespoke a determination to take the next fall. Like a serpent he twisted and bent, tripping with a cleverness that was the admiration of his comrades, and several times he almost had Grant at his mercy. Finally the "tenderfoot" ducked, twisted, and the would-be champion sailed over his shoulder, both shoulders and hips striking the floor with a thud that was heard throughout the room.

"By Jove, but that was prettily done," exclaimed

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Finch. "It is the first time the Frenchman has met his match in a year. Who is this young fellow?" he asked, turning to Duffy.

"He is from Vermont, and a friend of Wheeler's. I'm helping him to hunt up a cousin who is somewhere in the lumber woods. We'll tell you about it later. But if these fellows take him for a greenhorn they will get left."

Guiette was satisfied. The last fall had shaken him up as Grant had intended it should, and he did not care to risk another test. But he acted the part of a true sport, and admitted defeat by taking his victor's hand and complimenting him for his skill.

"You best man in de country. You trow me fair. I no match for you." With which he left the room and sought his bunk.

From that moment Grant held the respect of every woodsman present, who admired nothing so much as the ability to successfully contend with one of reputed skill.

At nine o'clock Finch escorted his guests to his own little side room where a double bunk had been prepared for them.

"You will be safer here," he said in a confidential tone when they had shut themselves in. "Them fellows are fairly decent when my eyes are on them, but there is no telling what they might do in the dark."

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"We appreciate your kindness," said Alex.

"I am glad you floored Guiette so easily," continued the host. "He is a regular mischief breeder, and if he had won it would have made him all the worse. It was a complete surprise to him as well as the rest of us, and may take some of the conceit out of him."

"He is an expert wrestler, and gave me all I cared to handle," replied Grant. "It is my good fortune to be a trained athlete, for which I have been very thankful on several occasions since leaving my home." Then he related some experiences along the way, giving an account of the interview with the half-breed, and the part he had taken towards bettering her condition. "Perhaps my heart got the better of my judgment, but I would do it over again; I simply could not leave her to become the slave of a brute."

"You did right, and any man with a heart would do the same," said Finch. "But as you were seen, it will likely cause trouble for you and Duffy when those buck Sioux return. I have heard of that girl, and the old chief expects to make a good thing out of a young warrior named Great Bear. I don't blame the girl for wanting to get away from him. He is a terror when he gets drunk, and would make a slave of her at best. Where is she going?"

"I directed her to Wheeler's at Grand Forks. If they don't wish to keep her I will send her to my mother. I am determined that she shall have the best of care

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and a thorough education. If the whole tribe takes after us, I will never give her up to such a life."

"If they trail you to this camp I will do my best to put them off the scent," said Finch. "But I would advise you to make the fastest time possible, and get to Round Lake before they overtake you. The Sioux are a pack of devils when their blood is up, and they think nothing of taking your scalp."

At an early hour on the following morning the travellers were moving, and noon found them on the brink of a shallow stream twenty-five miles farther on their journey. Here they halted and divided the liberal quantity of oats provided by Finch for the horses, and sat down to do justice to their own coarse but relishable fare. Four hours later they again heard the sounds of human industry, and through the trees could be seen a clearing, with here and there men at work felling, trimming and sawing trees. It proved to be a large camp near the banks of the Big Elk River, having its terminus at Round Lake, to which settlement the logs were floated to the yards of the Grand Rapids Lumber Company.

"We are coming to the worst camp in the district," cautioned Duffy. "Keep close to me as we make straight for the shanty. Whatever they may do, say nothing, for it will only breed a fight, which is what we want to avoid."

Silently they wended their way across the opening

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to a large frame building, where they were most cordially received by the foreman, a kindly-disposed middle-aged man, and arrangements made for a night's lodging.

"But I warn you to keep your eyes open, as my gang is not noted for politeness to strangers who are not of their stamp. I find it impossible to get a decent set of men to come up here, it is so far from civilization. The most of them are good workmen, but terrors when they get on a drunk. You may sit at my table and perhaps you will receive better treatment if they think you are my personal friends."

The warning put the visitors on their guard, and while Alex took little notice of the jabbering representatives of several nations, as he sat with Mr. Davis and Duffy at a side table, he could not fail to hear the slurring remarks which he knew were meant for himself and his companion. That a scheme was afloat he felt assured, and following his host's counsel kept his eyes open for the first move.

But if Duffy had any misgivings there were no outward indications. He was apparently indifferent to their presence. Alex Grant had yet to become acquainted with the capabilities of his trusted guide.

CHAPTER XVII

TALLASSE'S ARRIVAL.—A LOVING RECEPTION

"MOTHER, this monotony is simply unbearable. I feel more lonely than when John went away. I supposed Alex's coming and going would be just a pleasant incident, to be practically forgotten when he had passed from us. But he seems to have taken the whole house with him. I don't understand it," and Alice Wheeler dropped into a rocker before her mother, who was inspecting her husband's winter garments. "I almost wish he had taken me with him to help find John."

"It does seem lonely, dear; he brought so much life and sunshine with him. Alex Grant is an ideal young man. He seems like my own son," answered Mrs. Wheeler tenderly. "It is very rarely we meet with one who is temperate in all things as he is. His freedom from evil habits is exceptional for one of so much spirit. Your father has written to Robert Grant, giving a glowing account of Alex's untiring search and likelihood of success."

"Providing the daring fellow does not run into some overpowering danger. There is no telling what may happen when he gets among the lumbermen, for he won't put up with much impudence from any of them,"

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said Alice in a worried voice.

"He promised to be careful," said Mrs. Wheeler. "He is not quarrelsome, and only an actual assault or continuous abuse will cause him to fight."

"And goodness only knows where it will stop if he starts in," continued Alice, half laughing. "The agility of that youth is something marvellous. I watched him going through some athletic exercises in the barn last week, and he concluded the performance by pelting that conceited Dave Seymour all over the room. He springs like a cat, and when an opponent tries to reach him he is always out of the way. But I am glad Duffy is with him."

"The two will get on very nicely together. Dennis is just the one to be with him. But there is some one at the door, dear. Won't you answer the ring as Delia is out to-day."

Upon opening the door Alice looked into a beautiful reddish-brown face, and two expectant, snapping black eyes were lifted pleadingly to hers.

"Will you come in?" asked Miss Wheeler in a kind voice, noticing the stranger's hesitancy.

"Alice Wheeler?" asked a soft, trembling voice.

"Yes, I am Alice Wheeler."

"Alex Grant send Tallasse to pale-face sister," and slipping her hand into the bosom of her dress, Tallasse, for it was the Indian girl, drew out a letter and gave it to Alice.



Upon opening the door Alice looked into a beautiful,
reddish-brown face

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"Come into the house, dear child. If Alex Grant sent you I am sure we have a welcome," and taking the wearied, half-frightened girl by the hand, Alice led her to the sitting-room.

"A present from Alex, Mother. The dear boy knew I would sadly miss his pranks, so sent a substitute for me to look after."

Mrs. Wheeler's motherly heart at once came to the rescue. She seemed to understand the situation at a glance. Going to the girl she put a pair of affectionate arms about her waist and kissed the pretty red lips.

"You are welcome to our home, my dear child," she said kindly, and untying the strings of a home-made beaded hood, uncovered the dark hair.

Well might the good woman start back with an exclamation of surprise, as she looked into that beautiful, intelligent face. For a moment she stared at Tallasse spell-bound; then, with a burst of tender emotion she threw her arms about the Indian maiden and pressed her in a close embrace.

"You darling, darling child," and great tears came to her eyes, as she again kissed the upturned lips.

"Mother, you will crush the life out of the poor girl," laughed Alice, who was standing near, looking with sparkling eyes upon the scene. "Alex's letter will explain it all," and going to a chair near the window, she opened the letter, while her mother removed Tallasse's wraps and led her to another room, there to

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remove the stains of travel. The letter from Alex was as follows:

“ Indian Village, Roseau Co., Minn.

“ Tuesday Noon.

“ DEAR ALICE:

“ I know you must be lonely, in the absence of my disturbances, so I send a worthy subject for occupation. The poor girl needs a friend and sister. I believe she can find such in you as well as a protector in your noble mother. She is the daughter of Wabana, chief of this tribe of Sioux, who is now on a hunting expedition. Her mother, a white woman, is dead. She stood in the wigwam door as we passed, and noticing her superiority over the other squaws I stopped and questioned her. She is anxious to learn; she longs for pale-face society; she is naturally intelligent, and will prove an apt scholar. Be a sister and teacher to her until I return; then, if you do not wish to keep her longer, I will take her to my mother. I believe she is the makings of a noble woman. Do all you can to draw out her talents. She will appreciate your love. I feel safe in sending her to you, for I am sure your great heart has room for her. Keep a close watch,—guard her carefully, for the present, as a search may be instituted when her father returns. He has expressed his intention of marrying her to a brutal warrior, and would beat her into submission if he found her. I may have to suffer for being instrumental in her escape,

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as I was seen conversing with her. But there will be one dead redskin if we meet. Our travels thus far have been without special interest. We expect to reach a lumber camp this afternoon. Our hopes are high. Den is in good spirits. My variegated bronco is a treasure, and is proving his staying powers. He stands like a statue while I use him for a writing desk. Will write at every opportunity. Love to all. Good-bye.

“Your brother,

“ALEX.”

“Alex! Alex! You great-hearted boy!” she half sobbed. “Of course we will keep the poor child. She shall have a home here and every advantage that money can provide.”

When Mrs. Wheeler and her charge emerged from the bath and dressing-room an hour later, it was a transformed being that met Alice's gaze. If Tallasse's face was attractive upon her arrival, it was marvellously beautiful now. A thorough cleansing, a complete change of apparel, the shining black hair arranged in modern fashion, a collar about the well-shaped neck, and pretty slippers taking the place of decorated moccasins. Alice's garments fitted the maiden perfectly. Her face had become several shades lighter by a free application of soap and water, although the peculiar reddish hue, which added much to her beauty, still remained. The countenance was wreathed in smiles, the eyes danced with happy contentment.

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Alice uttered a little cry of delight, and taking the new-comer in a sisterly embrace, affectionately kissed the rounded cheeks and lips.

"You darling, pretty sister," she said softly. "How glad I am that Alex sent you to us. This shall be your home, and we shall love each other dearly."

"Tallasse love Sister Alice now," was the quaint reply.

"And Alice loves Tallasse now," rejoined Miss Wheeler, laughing, and again kissing the ruby lips. "But you must be very hungry," and with an arm about the girl's waist Alice conducted her to the dining-room, where a substantial lunch had been placed upon the table.

"Tallasse live here always?" she asked pleadingly, looking into the faces of mother and daughter, while great tears stood in her eyes, as all three took seats at the table.

"Yes, always," answered Mrs. Wheeler in a strained voice. "You are my daughter now. When Tallasse is rested she shall tell us all about herself. But you must eat," and leaving Alice with the nearly famished girl, she returned to the sitting-room, and taking up Alex's letter read it carefully through.

"She will be company for Alice," meditated the mother. "I shall place the child in her charge for instruction, and watch the developments. Dear Alex has performed a noble act in snatching her from the

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hands of such a father. May God bless him for his thoughtfulness."

It was a pretty sight to see the two girls, with arms about each other, as they returned from the dining-room, both faces shining with happiness. They were exactly the same height, and formed much alike, Tallasse's crude gracefulness lacking only Alice's trained poses.

"How old are you, dear?" asked Mrs. Wheeler as the girls stood before her.

"Eighteen summers," was the answer.

"And you have always lived in a wigwam?"

"Always. Wabana come from far. White man send him away."

"How long has your mother been dead?"

"Ten summers."

"Did she teach you?"

"Yes. She teach me pale-face talk; but Wabana say Tallasse must speak Indian."

"And she was white?"

"Yes. Wabana take her from bad warrior; save her from burn; marry her. Wabana good to her."

"And she named you Tallasse?"

"No. Mother name me Letitia. Her name Letitia."

Mrs. Wheeler started and turned pale, but controlled her feelings with an effort.

"Wabana call me Tallasse. When Mother die, him make me speak Indian all the time."

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“Was your mother pretty, like you?” Her object was to draw the girl into a full description of the dead mother, with the vague hope that it might be her own sister.

For answer the maiden drew from within her collar a gold locket and chain, and unfastening it from her neck, placed it in Mrs. Wheeler’s hand.

Tears rained from the good woman’s eyes as they gazed upon the well-remembered ornament, the duplicate of which lay in a drawer of her secretary. Mechanically she touched a spring and the locket flew open, and from within looked the two girl-faces as of old, time having taken nothing from their lustre. Back to that terrible day upon the prairies went her thoughts,—that day when father, mother, brother and sister had been torn from her, and she alone had been, by a special dispensation of Providence, saved to a happy life. Now, for the first time, was she told of that sister’s fate; after years of effort to hear from her, when all hope had departed, came the intelligence of her death, and from the lips of a descendant, so strangely sent to break the tidings. Going to her secretary, Mrs. Wheeler took from the inner drawer her own treasured locket, none the less bright, and laid the two side by side upon the table.

Alice, her heart beating with emotion, could but silently watch her mother, knowing by heart the story of her unfortunate aunt, and cling the closer to the girl

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who had so peculiarly come into her life.

Tallasse looked on with wonder, not understanding the circumstances; but when Mrs. Wheeler drew her attention to the contents of the second locket, she exclaimed:

"Tallasse mother and Aunt Sarah."

"I am your Aunt Sarah," spoke Mrs. Wheeler quietly, yet struggling bravely to keep from breaking down. "Your mother and I were sisters," and taking the half-dazed child in her arms, she pressed the girlish form to her breast.

Instantly two young arms encircled the aunt's neck, and a dark head rested upon the motherly shoulder.

"Tallasse Aunt Sarah. Tallasse Aunt Sarah," she murmured, as if to make sure it was not all a dream. "Oh, Tallasse so glad; so glad." Then she covered the dear face with passionate kisses.

"And Tallasse is my precious cousin," said Alice in a half-laughing voice to break the spell. "If Alex only knew of the happiness he had sent to our home I am sure he would be content."

"Alex Grant good brother," said the girl, lifting her now smiling face from Mrs. Wheeler's shoulder. "Him speak to Tallasse so nice. Him tell her how to come. Give her plenty money. Tallasse not forget him."

"Did you have any difficulty in finding your way?" asked Mrs. Wheeler.

"No. Man at Hallock good; put Tallasse on car.

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Conductor good; man at station send Tallasse here in carriage. All good to Tallasse."

At that moment Mr. Wheeler entered the room and looked inquiringly at the new-comer. Without a word Mrs. Wheeler slipped her arm within her husband's and guided him from the room to the parlor, there explaining to him the coming of Tallasse and her relationship to the family.

"I am glad she has come, Sarah," said the lumberman. "We have an abundance of room in our home and hearts for the child. And as she is a blood relation of yourself and Alice, there are very good reasons for adopting her legally into the family, and making her one of our own. But I fear you and Alice will spoil her with love," he concluded, as they returned to the sitting-room.

"Never fear," replied the noble wife. "Letitia's child shall have a mother's love, and also a mother's admonition. My child, let me present you to your Uncle William Wheeler," she said, turning to the maiden. "It was he who saved me from your poor mother's fate, and has cared for me ever since. Now he wishes to welcome his pretty niece to our home."

With a happy light in her eyes Tallasse went to her new uncle, and raised her face to his.

"Tallasse so glad," murmured the girl. "Tallasse be good daughter."

"Bless the child," he said in a husky voice, as he

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drew her to him. "You are welcome to our home; you shall never go back to the wigwam."

As she moved about the house in a restless yet happy manner, husband and wife could not keep their eyes from her. The quaint ways and fresh young beauty had completely won their hearts.

"We shall need her when John comes back," said Mr. Wheeler. "Alice will not long be with us, and this one must take her place."

"Then you have confidence in Alex's success?"

"There is no doubt of it. The boy will not come back till he finds John. That reminds me, I received an answer from Robert Grant to-day," and taking a letter from his pocket, he handed it to his wife. It read as follows:

"Burlington, Vt., September 8, 188—.

"WILLIAM WHEELER, ESQ.

Dear Sir: Your favor at hand. Am gratified at nephew's success in locating one so recently and closely associated with my son. Alex's persistence will not fail him. I have confidence in his ability to find John. My thanks for placing so experienced a woodsman at his disposal. As to your daughter's engagement to my son, would say: I have no objection to being affiliated matrimonially with a business man so generally known for his prosperity and integrity. Her photograph, which accompanied your letter, is before me. I am much pleased with her face. I accept her as a future

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daughter-in-law on trust. Shall expect to hear by wire the moment John is found.

“Yours very truly,

“ROBERT GRANT.”

“Mother, what are you reading?” asked Alice, returning to the sitting-room, followed by the happy Tallasse. “A letter from Vermont?” taking the envelope from her mother’s lap.

“From John’s father,” answered Mrs. Wheeler, handing her the letter. “I can understand his nature by the way he writes William. He certainly is very systematic in everything. But I am glad he has condescended to look favorably upon John’s choice. It evidently means a great deal for him.”

“And so he accepts me on trust—or on tick,” said Alice, comically. “That is interesting, truly. But as he precedes the statement by admitting that he is much pleased with my face, I’ll forgive him. He also seems to have a tender feeling for Alex. I am glad of that, for Alex Grant is worthy of it.”

“Alex Grant good man; Tallasse love him,” said the Indian girl softly, coming to Alice’s side.

CHAPTER XVIII

A TEST OF COURAGE.—DUFFY TAKES A HAND

IMMEDIATELY after the rough supper the woodsmen repaired to a large room at the opposite end of the building, where games were soon in progress, accompanied with disputes of the most profane nature. Half an hour later Duffy sauntered into the apartment, leaving Alex and Mr. Davis, the foreman, in conversation.

"Who is that dude out there talking to the boss?" asked one of the camp fellows.

"He is my partner," answered Duffy, quietly.

"What is he here for?"

"He is here on business."

"Call him in and we'll have some fun with him."

"As he is the guest of Mr. Davis you had better leave him alone."

"Come on, we won't hurt him. We'll just teach the tenderfoot the ways of the woods."

"Look here, young feller," and Duffy looked him calmly in the eyes. "We don't want any trouble in this shanty to-night,—not if we can help it. But you fellers will keep your hands off my partner or something will happen. Den Duffy ain't dead yet, and don't

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forget it."

"Better send him home to his mammy. He's no good for these diggin's," added a voice from behind.

At that moment Grant appeared in the doorway, where he stood for a moment surveying those within, when a young man of about his own age approached him.

"Hello, bub; glad to see you. Come in and have a game."

"No, thank you," was the quiet answer.

"Well, come in and sit down. Don't you smoke?"

"No."

"Have a game of checkers?"

"I'll watch the rest of you."

Noticing a mischievous-looking fellow edging around him, Alex stepped inside the door and stood with his back against the partition.

Two more approached and began asking questions, all of which were answered in a genial manner.

Suddenly, with a quick jerk, one of them unfastened his necktie, and was about to relieve him of it, when, with a little laugh, Grant checked him by catching the other end.

"If you want it as bad as that I'll give it to you," he said, handing the tie to him. "Have I anything else you want?"

"Got any cash?"

"No more than I need for myself."



“Hello, Bub; glad to see you. Come in and have a game.”

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"Have a game of poker?"

"I don't play poker," was the decided answer.

"Well, you needn't get ugly about it. It won't do you a d—d bit of good here."

"I have no intention of becoming ugly," replied Grant. "I simply answered your question." He turned to leave the room, but found the door blocked by two powerful individuals, whose faces bespoke mischief. Duffy rose from his chair, intending to go to his companion's assistance, as he saw trouble was brewing, but was pulled down by a pair of rough hands.

"See here, sonny, there's no use putting on yer high-eared airs," said one of the ringleaders. "You may as well come down from yer stilts and be one of us. We ain't going to have any dudeisms here."

"I have no wish to feel above any of you," said Alex quietly, looking straight into the fellow's eyes. "But I want you to understand that I never gambled, nor do I desire to learn how."

One of them grabbed his hand and attempted to draw him away from the partition, but an unexpected twist sent him to his knees, and with a howl of pain the fellow begged off.

"Will you keep your hands off me if I let you go?" asked Grant, laughing.

"Yes, only let up."

"What's the matter here?" asked a brutish-faced fellow of muscular build, who had pushed himself

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forward and stood before the visitor, ready to take part in a mix-up.

Alex at once sized him up as the bully of the camp, and gathered himself for a spring.

"He 'most twisted the hand off me," whined the other, rising from his knees.

The bully attempted to grasp Grant by the arm, intending to jerk him into the centre of the room, where they could surround him, but a cat-like bound, a vicious blow on the jaw, sent the bruiser flat on his back. He arose quickly and came at Grant like a demon, but was met with a left-hander under the right eye, which tipped his head backward, then with all his force Alex let go his wicked right. Like a sledge-hammer it landed squarely on the jaw-point, and the victim dropped in a heap, knocked completely out.

"If any one else wishes to try the experiment I'm ready," he said in a calm voice, but standing prepared for an onslaught.

No one moved, but all looked at him in amazement, while the fallen champion lay at his feet as one dead.

"You are a crowd of cowardly whelps," cried Grant, his anger for once getting the better of him. "I dare any three of your best men to stand before me for one moment." His eyes flashed as they swept the throng, but there were no volunteers. The lightning-like outbreak so completely phased them that none knew what might next occur, should they accept the challenge.

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"Duffy, come out of here," he continued, after waiting for a reasonable time. "We have no use for such a pack of curs."

The two left the room, and accompanied by Mr. Davis, who had witnessed the quickly decided contest, entered his own little apartment.

"You are a brave boy," he said, grasping Grant's hand. "You have rendered me valuable service. That fellow Kilroy has caused me more than a little bother, and is continually stirring up mutinous outbreaks of some kind. He has whipped everything within sight, and I am glad you proved more than a match for him. If he says anything to you in the morning, give him a sound thrashing."

But if Alex Grant conceived the impression that his victory over the bully of Elk River logging camp was to remain unchallenged he was to be disappointed. An undisputed submission to the stranger's superiority never for a moment entered Jake Kilroy's mind. Upon returning to consciousness his rage knew no bounds, and it was only after a stern demand for order on the part of Mr. Davis, and the promise of satisfaction next morning, that he was induced to go to his bunk. He felt confident of overpowering Grant in an open-air fight, and purposed to let the boys see that he was still champion of the camp.

At an early hour on the following day the woodsmen were astir, and looking forward to an interesting battle

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between Kilroy and Grant. All admitted the new-comer's sprightliness, but so used were they to looking upon Jake as invincible that the idea of a much lighter and apparently less experienced fighter snatching away his laurels seemed preposterous. Kilroy maintained a dogged silence, and the dark spot under his eye, where Grant's fist had landed, made him appear the more surly. He said not a word during the breakfast, but there was a determined look upon his face.

At half-past six the horses, which had been well cared for, were led from the barn by an attendant, and Den, with a liberal lunch in his bag, rifle in hand, had left the boarding-house ready for a start. Alex was walking slowly towards the animals, talking with Mr. Davis, when Kilroy approached from behind, and tapping him upon the shoulder, said roughly,

"Guess we'll finish that scrap, youngster. I ain't prepared to give up to no youth of your size yet awhile. Jake Kilroy's boss of this camp yet. See?"

"I have had enough of this nonsense, Kilroy," said Mr. Davis, sternly. "Mr. Grant is my guest, and you must keep your hands from him."

"You saw what he done last night?"

"I was an eye-witness. Mr. Grant was justified in knocking you down. You had no right to molest him."

"He'll fight to a finish just the same, whether you like it or not," replied the obstinate fellow. "No boy of his size can go out of this camp and say he's

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done up Jake Kilroy."

Without a word Grant handed Mr. Davis his rifle, then stripped himself of coat, vest and hat, which he laid upon the ground at the foreman's feet. The Vermonter's Yankee blood was boiling, and while outwardly calm, the glittering blue eyes showed a determined spirit.

"Will you promise me fair play, Mr. Davis?" he asked.

"Certainly. If you are willing to fight him I will see that no one interferes."

"I guess it's Den Duffy's turn to take a hand," said a smooth voice, and Alex's comrade, stripped to the waist, stepped forward. "Put on your clothes, Alex; I've got an account to settle with Jake Kilroy," and the old woodsman stepped into the human ring that had been formed in anticipation of the liveliest fistic encounter they had witnessed in many a day. Duffy was by no means a boy in appearance, but his muscles were still dangerously hard and well preserved. As he moved with an easy, sliding motion to the centre of the ring, there was a hidden spring in his limbs which young Grant's trained eyes at once detected. His usually kindly grey eyes sparkled with a new light, the bony hands shut and opened as the long arms swung pendulum-like at either side, and upon nearing Kilroy he rose upon the fore part of his feet and began dancing about like a colt. His attitude was most

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interesting, and one not familiar with his purpose would think he had merely stepped out for a jig dance.

"This ain't your fight, Duffy," said Kilroy, apparently unwilling to accept the substitute. "I'm settling with the youngster. I ain't got nothing agin you."

"But I've got an account agin you, you tarnal rat. Den Duffy hain't forgot how you ripped him up the back five years ago, and this is his first chance to get back at you. Stand up and show yourself a man," and Duffy squared off in true pugilistic fashion, still keeping up a half dance upon the balls of his feet.

Kilroy saw there was no help for him; the old bushwhacker was determined; yet he kept out of Duffy's reach, backing around the ring, while his opponent continued his menacing spring as he followed. "Stand your ground, you coward," he cried; "show your grit, if you have any, you pusillanimous whelp." Then, with a spring forward, Duffy attempted to grasp Kilroy, who avoided the rush by a spring sideways. Again Duffy sprang, but this time he was met with a light blow on the face. "That's more like it," said the trapper with a smile. "Now give me one on the other cheek," and as if compelled to obey, Kilroy's right arm shot out, his hard fist coming in contact with Duffy's right cheek with such force as to nearly send him from his feet.

"Now, look to yourself," and the long, bony arm struck out; but the light-footed champion neatly

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avoided the blow by a sidestep. The next came quickly, striking heavily against his chest, followed immediately by a right-hander in the face that sent him to the ground. This maddened Kilroy, and springing to his feet, he clenched, the two going to the ground. Then began an almost dog-like fight, the contestants tearing at each other with their hands, kicking, striking, pitching each other about in a terrible manner. Kilroy, much younger than his antagonist, showed remarkable skill, and attempted to so maim Duffy that he would be compelled to give up. But the older and hardened woodsman met him at every point, until Kilroy attempted to use his teeth.

"You tarnal dog. You'll bite, will you?" and lifting the unfeeling brute in his arms, he exhibited his immense strength by tossing him in the air, and catching him as he came down, he shook him as a Newfoundland would a terrier. "You traitor to all that's decent; you snake of snakes; you black-hearted reptile; look Den Duffy in the face for the last time and then say your prayers," and with perfect ease Kilroy was held at arm's length, the two for a moment looking each other in the face. It was a terrible moment. Every witness to the unusual scene saw that Kilroy was but a child in the hands of Duffy. So tight was the hold upon him that Kilroy could not break away, and so long were Duffy's arms that his face or body could not be reached. So intense was the strain upon the feelings of the spectators

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that they held their breath, expecting every moment to see Kilroy dashed to his death.

"You thought never to see Den Duffy agin, when you driv your knife into his back and left him for dead in the woods, after taking all he had. You murderer, you thief, you outcast from all that's respectable; you imp of the devil and subject for hell. I'll cheat the gallows of a deserving victim by sending you to the home of your father, the devil, where you belong. I——"

"Steady, Duffy," cautioned Mr. Davis. "Don't take his life. Remember the law of our country."

The words had their effect. For an instant only did the maddened woodsman hesitate. Then swinging Kilroy about his head, he threw him far without the ring, his body whirling through the air and falling into a thicket fully twenty feet away. Seldom had such an exhibition of strength been given to those who stood by. It was a scene never to be forgotten, and many of them hoped it might never be repeated.

"Thank you for speaking," said Duffy, turning to Mr. Davis when he had freed himself of the obnoxious Kilroy. "His attempt to bite me when we were down brought out all my hatred for him. I could hardly keep my hands off him last night, and if my partner hadn't laid him out so quick we should have settled our account then and there. He tried to kill me five years ago in the lower woods because I took sides agin

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him, and this is the first time we have met since. I knew he'd kill Grant by treachery if he couldn't beat him fair, and I was glad of the chance to change places with him. Kilroy has always been afraid of me, and wouldn't have fought to-day if I hadn't forced him."

By this time his normal spirits had returned, and donning his clothes, he shook hands with Mr. Davis, mounted his horse and rode from the camp, followed closely by Alex.

"Your whipping of Kilroy before all the camp boys may make a decent fellow of him," suggested Grant as they followed the river towards Round Lake.

"Perhaps; but I doubt it. His meanness is bred in the bone. Some day he will get hold of a fellow who will kill him, and the sooner the better, for the good of the lumber woods."

Duffy's familiarity with forest travel proved of great value, and although the trail at times was difficult, they ate their lunch thirty miles from the Elk River camp, well pleased with the progress they had made.

"I can't get over the feeling that we are going to have trouble with Wabana and his braves before we get through these woods," said Duffy a little anxiously. "We must make good headway this afternoon, and try to reach Round Lake by noon-to-morrow."

"But we must be about seventy-five miles from the Indian village. They surely won't follow us this far," said Alex, hoping they were beyond the reach of the

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redskins.

"They'll trail us as long as there is a track in sight," replied Duffy. "We must make quick time if we travel all night. Nothing will stop Wabana from overhauling us if he thinks we have his girl with us."

Silently the travellers mounted and made their way as rapidly as possible through the thick woods, keeping close to the river, and at dusk they found themselves within the precincts of a third logging camp.

This camp consisted of a better class of fellows than the Elk River gang, and Alex greatly enjoyed the evening's entertainment, quaint and rural as it was. Jenkins, the foreman, was very attentive, and vied with Duffy in telling stories of thrilling wood life, much to the interest of all present.

As a whole it was the pleasantest evening the travellers had experienced since leaving Grand Forks.

CHAPTER XIX

WABANA ON THE WARPATH

TWO DAYS after the passing of Grant and Duffy from the Indian reserve, Chief Wabana, accompanied by Great Bear, a powerful, sharp-eyed warrior, and fifty braves, returned to the wigwam village, laden with game. They were in high spirits, for during their absence the pipe of peace had been smoked with the tribe of Itasca county reservation, of which Great Bear, a young prince, was the recognized head. Wabana had pledged his daughter to the youthful chief in consideration of certain specified articles of property, and it was for the purpose of taking her as his bride that he had returned with the hunters to their home.

A shout rose upon the air as they entered the village, followed by a reply of welcome from those who had remained at camp, and soon the burdened warriors—husbands and sons—were surrounded by a swarm of gibbering men, women and children. Great Bear was received with the respect due his station, and as guest of Wabana he was at once conducted to the large tent at the village outskirts. The young aspirant to matrimonial honors felt his pulse quicken as he neared the home of her who was so soon to become his own

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property. He had entertained no thought of rejection at her hands. Her distant behavior on previous occasions was credited to the girl's natural timidity, from which she would be expected to emerge in due time. Her beauty pleased him. In his search for a squaw throughout the northwestern reservations, he had met with none who could compare with Tallasse. Her consent had not been included in the dicker. That was a matter of course. He, as chief, had but to select, and the favored one was supposed to acquiesce, deeming it a high honor to associate with and bear the burdens of a husband so exalted.

Every preparation had been made between the Indians. The marriage was to be celebrated on the following day, and after a general jubilee the bride and groom were to depart to the Itasca camp, where a like celebration had been arranged at the home of his people. Great Bear was slightly chagrined at Tallasse's failure to appear at the door of her father's tent to welcome him, but this also was put down to her modesty, —to be outgrown in future relations.

"Tallasse! Tallasse!" called Wabana, emerging from the tent. But no answer came. He scouted about the immediate surroundings, but she was not to be found. In consternation he returned to the prospective son-in-law, and for a moment they looked into each other's faces.

A parley was called, from which was elicited the

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information that the princess had not been seen for two days. She had disappeared on the night following the pale-faces' visit. Then was given an account of Grant and his speckled horse; the conversation; the letters he had given her. They had parted with a kiss. He had gone his way, and she had returned to the wigwam. That night she had disappeared—no one knew whither. But all who had witnessed the meeting knew the direction he had taken.

A council of war was called, and arrangements perfected to trail the kidnappers. As it was late in the afternoon, an early start would be made next morning. Three bands were to be formed, one moving along the river bank, another taking the trail, and a third beating to the right to head the fugitives off. Great Bear was wild with passion. He clutched his tomahawk in one hand, his knife in the other, and with face towards the setting sun vowed that the pale-face scalp would dangle from his belt within two days. In this he was backed by Wabana, who must deliver his daughter into the hands of her suitor or forfeit all right to the coveted property.

Not for many moons had this little village known such excitement. Nor were the women one whit behind their lords in a desire to overtake and properly chastise the perpetrator of so brazen an act. But most of all was to be regretted the upsetting of the anticipated wedding, which had been looked forward to by all.

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Tallasse, the village belle and pet of the tribe, was to be honored as became the high station of a princess, and many a beaded trinket lay waiting to be presented to her on the occasion of her nuptials. And now she was gone, stolen, upon the eve of her wedding, carried away to be the bride of a hated pale-face.

The fierce nature of the Indian was at fighting tension. A war-dance was organized and an image tied to a stake, about which fagots were piled high. A torch was applied, and as the flames arose a hideous yell went up and the war-dance commenced. Far into the night it continued, until, worn-out, the participants either dropped to the ground or went to their wigwams in an exhausted condition to sleep.

At daybreak forty warriors, hideous in their paint and feathers, collected in the village centre for a pow-wow. Then fifteen ponies, carrying as many riders, started on a swift lope to the right. Fifteen more, headed by Great Bear, took the trail, while the remaining ten, led by Wabana, made for the left, to follow the river.

It was a nicely planned charge and calculated to make escape impossible. Wabana and Great Bear anticipated the route taken. Both were acquainted with the lower counties and estimated that the fugitives would make for the railroad at Round Lake, from whence transportation would be secured for Duluth, over the direct line.

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With a savage light in his eyes, Great Bear led his followers on, on, on; and shortly before noon Finch's camp was reached. An exclamation of surprise greeted the little feather-bedecked band as it came in sight. Finch knew at once what was up and made calculations accordingly.

"Speckle hoss! Speckle hoss!" cried the young chief, drawing rein before the shanty. "Speckle hoss! Pale-face—gal!"

"Well, what about him?" asked Finch in a rough voice.

"Him come this way?"

"Who come this way?"

"Speckle hoss—pale-face—gal."

"I ain't seen no speckled-hoss pale-faced gal. What the devil are you talking about, anyhow?"

"Pale-face take gal; run fast on speckle hoss; you—see him?"

"Guess not. No gal been here. Get off yer pony and have dinner." Finch knew the Indians were after Grant and Duffy and that every hour's delay meant a better chance for their escape.

The Indian looked at him stolidly.

"Great Bear—hurry. He go—go—go! Catch—pale-face. Kill. Take scalp. Take gal back—wig-wam."

"Well have yer dinner first. You'll catch him all right. We'll feed yer horses, too."

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The ruse succeeded. The Indians and ponies were fed, then a parley followed. A peace pipe was smoked over a bowl of whiskey. In an hour, every one of the bloodthirsty demons was drunk as a fool and Finch laughed to himself at the success of his trick.

"There will be some fun when these fellows sober up," he said to the boys. "We'll keep them drunk till morning, if it takes every drop of liquor I have. It will give Grant and Den a long lead and perhaps they will reach a settlement before the reds overtake them. If it wasn't for stirring up their hatred, I'd take every gun, knife and hatchet from them."

They lay on the floor like pigs, grunting and snoring. As one would make signs of wakening, Finch or his men would put a bottle to his lips and the Indian would drain it eagerly, only to lapse into another noisy slumber. At midnight the raw whiskey gave out; over three gallons of liquor had been put in their stomachs, and the lumbermen considered it well placed.

The disturbance began when Great Bear got to his feet and, discovering the trick, drew his tomahawk and knife.

"None of that," sounded in his ears, and turning, he looked into the muzzle of a gun in Finch's hands. "You'll behave or I'll blow your roof off."

"Speckle hoss! Pale-face—gal. Me no catch. Great Bear want gal," he grunted fiercely.

"You can start along after breakfast. Sit down,"

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pointing to a bench.

Gradually the fifteen were awake and a tremendous hubbub followed. Their anger was hot, but as the lumbermen outnumbered them four to one, a protest was of little use, so they made the best of a bad job and waited silently for breakfast.

Later, as they filed out upon the trail, a derisive howl went up from half a hundred throats, and then it dawned upon the redskins that they had thoroughly and purposely been trapped. Answering the jeers with a blood-curdling yell, they dug their heels into their ponies' sides and shot away in the distance. Horseflesh was of secondary consideration. The pursuers were bent on overtaking the fugitives, the young chief urging the warriors on recklessly. At noon they had travelled thirty-five miles and at nightfall camped half way between Elk River camp and Joe Jenkins' headquarters. Great Bear and his braves assiduously steered clear of more lumber camps. One experience with pale-face firewater was sufficient.

At early dawn they were again on their ponies tearing across the country, and at noon joined company with Wabana fifteen miles above Round Lake.

Meanwhile the right wing made impetuous progress. Their route led through small settlements, and hour after hour the little band thundered along over turn-pike roads. The first day they traversed seventy-five miles, camping in the woods near Red Lake Falls.

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The second night found them eighty miles farther on their journey, at Cass Lake, within twenty miles of Round Lake. They had calculated the distance with remarkable accuracy.

With Great Bear camping in the woods forty miles above, Wabana resting on the river bank about the same distance, and the other fifteen twenty miles below, Grant's chances for escape seemed slender. If the "speckle hoss" and his rider could only reach the railroad terminus at Round Lake, small as the settlement was, assistance might be obtained. But with forty Indians on the warpath, armed to the teeth, all desirous of lifting his scalp, and closing in on him from three sides with the utmost speed of fleet-footed ponies, nothing short of a miracle could save him and his companion from their revenge. True, they each possessed repeating rifles and a brace of revolvers; Den was a dead shot, and "Ole Betsy" was capable, in his hands, of making holes through as many Indians as there were cartridges in her magazine. Alex could plug a bull's-eye three times out of five at two hundred yards, but how long the pair might hold their own against forty rifles pointing at them from three sides, was a profound question for speculation.

In these days of modern hunting the redskin is quite skilled in the use of firearms, and generally covers a target aptly. This particular expedition was no pleasure excursion. Every one of the pursuers was maddened

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to the heart. The "speckle hoss" and pale-face were their objective game, and to run them to the death was their determination. Duffy was familiar with their craftiness and conduct of warfare. He knew their agility, wiliness and sharpness; yet God help the warrior who came within reach of "Ole Betsy." To see an Indian decked in feathers and paint meant fight to Duffy—but an Indian out on the warpath meant a picnic for "Ole Betsy." The two might be overpowered, but many a Sioux would bite the dust before that end came.

CHAPTER XX

THE THREE-SIDED CHARGE.—A PATHETIC ENDING

"Do you hear that? Them's reds on our trail, and not more than a mile away." Springing from his horse, Duffy put his ear to the ground and listened. "There are three bands, coming from three directions, and they are coming like the wind. That panther call was a sign; they intend to close in and capture us. But they'll have to move lively if they overtake us before we reach the settlement. It's about five miles to Round Lake, and we'll have to make it. Here goes," and leaping upon his horse, the woodsman led a race the like Grant had never before experienced. Duffy's mount fairly flew over the ground, while the bronco, keeping in reserve a portion of his speed, easily galloped apace.

A mile or more had been covered, when suddenly, from a thick wood to the left, shot fifteen mounted Indians, led by Great Bear. They were headed directly towards the flying white men.

"Speckle hoss. Speckle hoss," shouted the young chief in a voice of triumph. "Speckle hoss, pale-face, —no gal."

"Them feathers and war-paint mean fight," said

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Duffy in a decided tone. "Keep low in your saddle and let the bronco go for all he's worth. Don't mind me. My rifle magazine is well charged, and I'm good for a dozen."

At that moment a ball from Great Bear's rifle hummed over their heads. He was not over a hundred yards away, and his braves were close behind. As he raised his weapon to fire again, a leaden messenger from Duffy's rifle entered the breast of the chief's pony, and the beast dropped in his tracks. The rider turned a somersault and landed in a sitting posture. Then came a volley from fourteen rifles, one of the balls going through the corner of Grant's lunch bag, and another penetrating the rim of Duffy's hat. The next instant two more ponies went down, causing the other twelve to instantly draw rein.

Not for an instant did the Dakota steeds slacken their speed. On they tore, gradually drawing away from the enemy, when Great Bear appropriated another pony and gave chase, his followers bringing up the rear. For perhaps twenty rods he came on screaming and firing, when Duffy turned in his saddle and fired. True to its mark sped the bullet, and the animal dropped, his dusky rider going head-foremost to the ground in a manner that could not but have given him a terrible shaking up.

"Lay there," said Duffy grimly. "The next ball will go through your red carcass, you villain."

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The precision with which the old woodsman's rifle was doing its work evidently had its effect upon the courage of the attacking party, for they drew rein and surrounded the fallen chief, who, nothing daunted, unhorsed a warrior, and springing upon a third mount, again took up the chase, determined to personally deal out his vengeance upon the abductor of his intended bride. His bead-like eyes blazed with hatred and anger as, leaning eagerly forward, he urged the pony onward.

At that moment fifteen more decorated horsemen appeared on the right, rapidly approaching.

"Shoot for the horses, and shoot fast," said Duffy, bringing his rifle to bear on the foremost. Four more horses went down, but on the band came, Great Bear and his Indians in the rear, striving industriously to overtake the victims. Then one of the bronco's forefeet covered a rolling stone, causing him to stumble, and Grant shot over his head, turning a somersault. Like a cat he landed on his feet, rifle in hand, and the next instant a yelling brave was sent forever to his happy hunting-grounds.

Frenzied with rage, and with blood-curdling yell, the Indians immediately surrounded him. There followed a fierce hand-to-hand fight. Knives and tomahawks glistened and sang in the air, but Grant, using his rifle as a weapon of defense, clubbed right and left, knocking his assailants sprawling wherever

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the butt landed. His suppleness and dexterity stood him in good stead until Duffy had checked his horse, and was returning to the rescue. Suddenly "speckle hoss," the bronco, dashed by him, and with mouth open and ears back, sprang into the fray, kicking, jumping, striking and biting with a fierceness that scattered the Indians right and left. Several attempted to capture him but were compelled to flee for safety. Then, with the intelligence of a human being, the bronco gave a little whinny, sprang to his master's side, and in a twinkling Grant had leaped to his back and was flying from the bewildered savages at a pace that challenged the speed of their swiftest ponies, Duffy following closely. Hopes of reaching the settlement were now high, when directly in front of them appeared Wabana and his nine braves, ready for battle.

As though all depended upon him, the bronco again laid back his ears, opened his mouth to its greatest extent, and with a mad rush made for the on-coming Indians, indulging in a series of menacing antics as he entered their ranks that caused an opening to be made and ere they were aware of it the two riders had been carried beyond their reach and were racing towards Round Lake. Five minutes later the foaming animals halted before a store at Round Lake settlement, and were immediately surrounded by about fifty inhabitants who had heard the firing.

"What's up?" asked Mr. Graves of the local lumber

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company, and head man of the settlement, approaching Grant. "Got into trouble?"

"Not very deep, I hope. Only a fight with a band of Sioux Indians."

"What are they on the warpath for?" he persisted suspiciously.

"Blessed if I know. They swooped down on us five miles from here, and we had to fight and then run for it. They will be here in a few moments. I want to house the horses and get out of sight."

"We heard firing, but didn't know what it meant. Come to my house, while I look into the matter. Here, Bill, take these horses to the company's barn and rub them dry." Then Grant and Duffy followed Mr. Graves to a house near by, where explanations were made in full.

"The sooner it is settled the better," said Mr. Graves, when he had been made acquainted with the circumstances. "They probably think you have the girl hidden somewhere, and want to make you own up. As I am the magistrate of this settlement, I think we can adjust matters in your favor."

The pow-wow began about twenty minutes later, when thirty Indians rode into Round Lake, followed in a few minutes by nine others.

A rush was made for Grant as he followed Mr. Graves across the small village square to the store veranda, but the attempted assault was checked by

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fifty rifles in the hands of as many sturdy settlers.

"Pale-face. Pale-face," threatened Great Bear, as he retired to one side of the square with his braves.

"What do you want?" asked Mr. Graves sternly.

"Pale-face take gal, run on speckle hoss. Great Bear want gal. Take wigwam."

"Do you expect to find her here?"

"Pale-face hide gal."

At this point Wabana, the girl's father, an intelligent, large-framed man, with a set countenance, advanced and acted as interpreter.

"Wabana's gal gone," he said in very good English. "Pale-face give her money. Give her letter. Kiss her. Tell her go. He go on speckle hoss. Tallasse go at night. Wabana want gal marry Great Bear. Gal no like; Wabana say must. Great Bear give much horse, much tobac, much blanket, some money. Make Wabana rich man."

"And you intended to sell your daughter to that brute?" demanded Mr. Graves indignantly. "You ought to be shot."

"Pale-face brother not shoot. Wabana good warrior. Him love Tallasse much."

"You lie. No father who has a spark of love for his child would do such a thing," and the magistrate's eyes flashed dangerously. "Go back to your people, and don't try to make a disturbance among peaceful inhabitants."

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"Great Bear take pale-face. Kill," and drawing his tomahawk he flourished it threateningly. Instantly thirty-nine tomahawks were cleaving the air; but as the settlers stood ready for action, no forward movement was made.

After an extended parley with Mr. Graves, who explained that Grant did not take the girl away, the Indians withdrew, ostensibly with the intention of returning to their reservation, but in truth to await developments and concoct some mode of capturing the pale-face. They had no intention of giving up their game so easily. They had raced for over a hundred miles on the trail and, still believing that Grant knew of the maiden's whereabouts, were determined to secure him.

Deeming it advisable to leave the settlement without delay, Alex had arranged to take passage on the afternoon train for Grand Rapids, having secured a box car from Mr. Graves in which to transport the horses. At two o'clock the animals were led from the stable, and Grant was standing beside Duffy on the store veranda awaiting the coming of the magistrate. Suddenly the clatter of hoofs reached their ears, and around a bend in the road swung thirty mounted Indians, evidently intent on finishing their work. As Great Bear's eyes rested upon Grant an expression of intense hatred came to his face, and with a howl of rage he dashed towards the store, tomahawk in hand.

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"Not this trip," said Duffy coolly, raising his rifle to his shoulder. "Another step and you die in your tracks."

"Wabana talk to pale-face?" asked the old chief, beckoning to Alex.

"Talk ahead," was the reply.

By this time the friendly settlers were on hand prepared to resist an assault upon the white travellers, and the slightest move in that direction would have caused bloodshed.

At the advice of Mr. Graves, Alex stepped to the piazza-front and held the following dialogue with the aged chief.

"Pale-face take gal?"

"No," in a clear voice.

"Pale-face give gal letter?"

"Yes."

"Pale-face give gal money?"

"Yes."

"Pale-face kiss gal?"

"No; gal kiss pale-face."

"Pale-face liar," thundered Great Bear. But no one noticed his remark.

"Pale-face know where gal go?"

"No," said Grant. "Tallasse said she was lonely and unhappy. She was afraid of that ugly brute," pointing at Great Bear, whose eyes flashed wickedly. "She wanted me to take her away, but I could not do

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that. So I gave her a letter to my friends and money to go with."

"Where pale-face friends?"

"Many miles towards the east."

"Tallasse not go."

"Then I don't know where she is."

"Pale-face coward. Great Bear fight," and dropping from his pony, the muscular young chief stripped to the waist. "Come."

"What do you want to fight for?" asked Mr. Graves, suspiciously. "Mr. Grant has told you plainly that he knows nothing of the girl's whereabouts. That must settle the difficulty. If you don't return to your village I will have every one of you locked up."

"Great Bear fight pale-face, see who best man," explained Wabana. "That red man way. No knife, no tomahawk, no gun. Great Bear get much hurt, pale-face best man; pale-face get much hurt, Great Bear best man. Then smoke pipe peace; shake hand; go back to wigwam."

"Then I am to understand that Great Bear wants to settle the dispute with a single-handed fight?" said Mr. Graves.

"Ugh," grunted Wabana.

"Will he fight fair?"

"Ugh. Him fight fair."

"What do you say, Mr. Grant? Are you able to cope with him? He is much heavier than you are."

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"I will attempt it," and Grant at once began to strip for battle.

But Duffy's bony hand was laid upon his shoulder. "This is my fight, Alex," he said. "You have friends waiting for you in the East and in the West. Den Duffy hain't got any this side the grave. I won't be missed if I do pass in my checks. And I promised Wheeler to see you through. Great Bear is a devil to fight, and he intends to kill you. I've been there before, and know the Indian tricks. You just keep your clothes on, and watch us from here. Den Duffy hain't so old but he can put up a middlin' good fight yet."

"But he won't be satisfied with a substitute," replied Grant. "It is me he wants to handle. Your taking my place may create further trouble, which we wish to avoid."

"He'll fight Den Duffy or nobody," answered the woodsman firmly. "You hain't a-going to dirty your hands on that tarnal brute, and that settles it."

But the sacrifice was not required of the great-hearted trapper. As Duffy, naked to the waist, was descending to the ground, the bronco, who, throughout the discussion, had shown a restless spirit, requiring two men to hold him, suddenly broke from his keepers, and with a few bounds had entered the ring, scattering Indians and pale-faces in every direction. Great Bear, who was about to protest when he saw Duffy was to

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be his contestant, did not observe the commotion, and before he was aware of it, the bronco was upon him, sinking his teeth into his neck, and throwing him to the ground, to tramp upon him until his head and body were crushed almost beyond recognition. Then, turning upon the dazed Wabana, the enraged animal grasped him by the decorated hair, shook him viciously, and throwing the poor old chief to the ground, treated him as he had the younger warrior. So quickly was the terrible deed accomplished that none had time to interfere; and it is doubtful if the pinto would have allowed even his beloved young master to check him.

His self-appointed mission ended, and the other Indians at a safe distance, the bronco quietly returned and submitted himself to the charge of his keepers.

Alex and Mr. Graves went at once to the prostrate chiefs, and found them both dead.

"There is something back of this act," said the magistrate finally. "Where did you get that bronco?" addressing Grant.

"Mr. Wheeler of Grand Forks gave him to me. He is known by the North Dakota Indians as the 'Speckled Devil.' "

"I thought as much. He has been abused in his earlier existence, and, like the Indian, a full-blooded bronco, especially of the pinto breed, never forgets ill treatment. At the same time they exhibit a deep affection to those who show them kindness, and particu-

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larly to a generous master."

Gently they lifted the dead chiefs and bore them to the company's building, ready to acquiesce in the wish of the sorrowing companions as to the disposition of the bodies. As it was finally decided impracticable to attempt to transport them to their respective villages, the braves, with disappointment visible upon their faces, departed, upon receiving the promise from Mr. Graves that the dead would be decently buried.

Half an hour later the horses were secured in a car which had been coupled to the regular train, and with the hearty good wishes of every settler of Round Lake, the travellers stepped aboard.

"This has been an eventful day," remarked Grant as the train pulled out from the little station. "And I don't know as I should care to have the experiences repeated; particularly the last act. I believe my bronco is really more than half human. At all events he knows just when to rush to the rescue."

"And he keeps within the limit of the law," answered Duffy, half humorously, "for the attacking party has no law back of him."

"Be that as it may, he has saved my life to-day, and possibly yours, Duffy," said Alex, soberly, and added as they sank into their chairs, "I wonder what will be the next item on our lively programme."

CHAPTER XXI

THE FINDING OF JOHN GRANT

THE Grand Rapids Lumber Company, with logging camps and mills extending far into the northern forests, had its head office at the little town of that name. Opposite the Grand Rapids railroad station were the combination yards, covering an area of several acres, into which branched tracks from the main line, winding snake-like among the great pile of boards, planks and building timbers ready for immediate shipment to the chain of lakes below, or over the network of railroads throughout the country. Immediately facing the depot was a large, three-story, frame building, having the appearance of office and storehouse combined. It was a stately structure, indicative of the prosperous condition of the company, yet quite in keeping with the business designated upon the sign stretching across the entire front.

"There is a pretentious-looking establishment," remarked Alex Grant to his companion as they stepped from the Round Lake train upon its arrival at the station. "I wonder if it contains anything of interest to us. So many things have developed within the past two weeks that we are likely to run up against most

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anything, even to the runaway we are hunting. I will put the usual question anyway, and then we will look up a place for the night," and bidding Duffy see to the horses, Grant crossed the tracks and disappeared within the office door.

"Is the manager in?" he inquired of a gentlemanly young clerk who had stepped to the business window upon his entrance.

"He is in his private office. I will speak with him."

The clerk returned and asked Alex to follow him, and a moment later he stood within a large, well-appointed room. As he entered his eyes rested upon an elderly gentleman busily writing at a desk, and at a window near by a stenographer was making her fingers fly over her keys. At the opposite end of the office sat a bearded young man engaged in adding a long column of figures. His back was towards the entrance door, yet there was something familiar about the outline which caused the visitor to start perceptibly. The accountant turned and the young men's eyes met.

"Alex!"

"John!" And the next minute the "Grant twins" were in each other's arms. Then, his pent-up feelings giving way, John Grant buried his face on Alex's shoulder and wept. Bravely had he held his own for nearly four years with that indomitable spirit inherited from his father, but the unexpected appearance of his boyhood chum proved too much for his self-control

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and he sobbed in his cousin's embrace like a child. Alex understood the strain his cousin must have borne alone; he knew the dark hours borne bravely without a murmur or a visible sign of the torture his high-strung, sensitive nature was passing through, and he knew the heartache that added to the heavy burden. He patted John's shoulder as he said briskly, to cover his own emotion, "Isn't it about time you gave an account of yourself, sir, and returned home to your relatives? I've been chasing you all over the country for months and months, and now that I have found you, there is going to be a straightening-up between us."

"I've nothing to straighten up, Alex," replied John, slightly defiant, a habit he had acquired for self-protection while he was being knocked about in the world. "You know the cause for my leaving home."

"Cause or no cause, you are going to return, if I have to pack your box and sit on you all the way to Vermont. Your father is heart-broken and anxious to make amends. Alice Wheeler is almost distracted and will never forgive me unless I bring you safely to her. Your father wants you in the business and your place is with him, John. He has aged rapidly since you left and the lessons taught by your absence have been most profitable to him. The methods you stood for have been in operation some time; but come on, my boy; we must first return to Grand Forks," he finished with a merry smile.

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'Do you know—Alice?' asked John, suddenly growing bashful and reddening slightly.

"Sure thing," nodded Alex. "I stayed a week at the Wheelers' and Alice and I grew to be great friends. If it wasn't for another girl—honestly, John—I would take her from you. Alice is too good a girl for a runaway like you. But her love sticks to you like a porous plaster and she is ready to keep her promise any time you return to claim it."

"Mr. Warden," said John, turning to the gentleman at the desk, "I may as well own up. My name is not Graham, but Grant. I am John Grant of Burlington, Vermont, and this is my cousin Alex Grant of the same place. I had a misunderstanding with my father four years ago and left home in a huff. We never communicated, but he has sent Alex hunting me. I am very sorry to leave you, sir, but I must go home. I have been considering this for some time,—my pride alone has kept me undecided, but now Alex is here for me, I must go."

Mr. Warden rose and clasped his employee's hand warmly. "John," he said tenderly, "I have always felt you were not what you represented yourself to be, and am not surprised at this turn in your affairs. I know of your father in a business sense, and have some idea of the extent of his interests. Your place is with him, John. Your differences are no affair of mine, but whatever may have occurred in the past, bury them,

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my boy, and return to your home. Your experiences as a lumberman call for a higher position than clerking;—go to your father; stand by him; and as he gradually resigns the business to your care, assume the responsibility gladly and with the vigor I know you are capable of."

"We'll have to appear in Grand Forks first," put in Alex, "or a howl will go up from there that will ring in my ears all the ages to come. The fact is, Mr. Warden, this young man is engaged to a handsome North Dakota lassie, and Alice Wheeler has threatened me with total extinction if I don't trot my precious cousin up there without delay."

"You surely can't mean William Wheeler's daughter?" asked Mr. Warden.

"The same," acknowledged Alex. "John was employed in her father's office, grew afraid his own father would locate him through the old friendship existing between him and Wheeler, so he up and ran away."

"Can it be possible?" ejaculated Mr. Warden. "I congratulate you on getting into that family, John, with all my heart. Wheeler is president of our Lumberman's Association, and one of the cleanest men in the business. Take the rest of the day and begin the packing at once."

Thanking him and promising to see him in the morning, John conducted Alex from the building to

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his lodging in a private family, telling Duffy to put up at a nearby hotel, as he was anxious to have his cousin alone, to talk things over that had transpired during their long separation. Linking arms, they went to their rooms and having much to relate as well as many plans to suggest, they sat up well into the night. Alex went to sleep, well satisfied with the result of his search; and John, elated with the prospect of again seeing his father, could scarcely control his joy, although he agreed with Alex that his first visit must be to Alice, the girl whose love he had treasured so highly. She had been true to him through all, and her heart was still in his keeping, he knew. He could now claim her truthfully, as his own. Delay in their union was no longer necessary, and so with a great peace at his heart he closed his eyes in sleep.

On the following morning the horses were shipped for Grand Forks in Duffy's care, after which Alex and John, having packed the latter's belongings, bidden their adieus and sent telegrams to Grand Forks and Vermont, took the train for St. Paul.

"You must get shaved, John," said Alex, glancing at his cousin's beard as they sped along towards their destination, "and we will buy suits just alike when we reach St. Paul. I want to play a trick on Alice to see if she can tell us apart. We will walk up the steps arm and arm and present ourselves before her ladyship for identification. Of course she will pick you out

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by some line of the face or the wave of your hair; but the resemblance will test the lady's keenest scrutiny, I'll wager."

"You have lost none of your love of mischief, I see," replied John, good-naturedly. "But it seems so good to be with you again, I can put up with almost anything from you." As they entered the state capital, a newsboy entered the car with a bundle of morning papers under his arm. "*St. Paul Dispatch*,—all about the big Indian fight at Round Lake—*Dispatch*," he cried. "Paper, mister?"

"Yes—give me two," said Alex, jingling the price in his pocket. Then handing his cousin one of the copies, he settled down to enjoy reading a graphic account of the uprising. Mr. Graves had telegraphed a thrilling account of the disturbance, yet none of those who read it and commented upon the unlooked-for attack and its probable results had the slightest thought that the young man chatting so pleasantly with his bearded friend was the instigator and intended victim of the Indian uprising.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WANDERER RETURNS.—A JOYOUS REUNION

WITH joy unspeakable filling her heart, Alice Wheeler danced into the room waving a telegram over her head. Her pretty face was wreathed in smiles and the blue eyes sparkled with delight.

"Oh, Mother, Mother, read—quickly," she cried. "See, a telegram from Alex saying John is found. They will both be here to-day." Mrs. Wheeler caught the message from her daughter's extended hand and read:

"Grand Rapids, Mich., Sept. 25, 188—

"To MISS ALICE WHEELER, Grand Forks, N. D.

"Have found John; will return by train this evening. John sends love.

ALEX GRANT."

"Isn't it just lovely?" exclaimed the happy girl, hardly knowing how to express herself in the fullness of her joy. "Alex and Dennis must have been very rapid to travel that distance in so short a time. Just look, mother; they were near Duluth, and Duluth is at the head of Lake Superior. I wonder how John looks—if he is as handsome as ever. The dear fellow." Then the enraptured girl began planning air-castles for the future of herself and lover.

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"I am so glad for your sake, dear," said the mother, and going to the telephone she told the good news to her husband.

"Alex Grant come back?" queried an eager voice, and Tallasse tripped in from the kitchen, dressed in a becoming maroon gown. Ten days had made a wonderful change in the beautiful child of the forest. She was now the beloved daughter of wealth. Every indication of her Indian life had been banished. In her natural loveliness, inherited from the dead mother, she was a joy to the Christian home so miraculously restored to her. None would associate her refinement and beauty with the savage red man, nor was her former habitation likely to be ever known, save to those of special privilege.

Like all those of her father's race, the child's affections were of a depth that bordered upon adoration; for in her pure innocence restraint was unknown, and to those who had befriended her the heart-love went out unreservedly. Upon Alex Grant, by whose chivalry her changed conditions had been brought about, was her deepest regard bestowed. Her keen appreciation of his timely friendship had become a part of her being, and the most casual mention of his name was sufficient to command her instant attention. It was quite natural, therefore, that Alice's excited exclamations should set the young heart bounding and draw from her the question in regard to his return.

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"Yes, darling, he will be here this evening," answered Mrs. Wheeler, smiling into the flushed little face.

"Tallasse so glad," breathed the rosy lips impulsively. "Tallasse love Alex Grant."

Since coming to the Wheeler home Tallasse had often referred to Alex in the most endearing terms, and fearing for her future state of heart, Mrs. Wheeler decided that it would be the better plan to acquaint her with young Grant's relations to Miss Whiting. She wished to prevent the deepening of a love which was undoubtedly forming in the young heart. To Alice had been entrusted the task, and as Tallasse so innocently spoke of her love for Alex, she gently drew her to the parlor, where for a few minutes they stood before a window overlooking the sweeping lawn.

"You will always live with father and mother, dear," she began, drawing the new-found sister to her in a loving embrace. "I shall soon go away from them and you must take my place here, in their hearts. You will make them very happy with your great love; you will be their loving daughter. Tallasse must not leave her new mother and father; they will be so lonely."

"No, no. Tallasse not go away. This nice home; nice mother, nice father, nice sister Alice. Tallasse stay. Tallasse stay alway."

"I shall be married soon. My sweetheart will be here this evening."

"Alex Grant?" with a questioning glance in her eyes.

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"No; his cousin, John Grant. Alex, too, has a sweetheart. She is a beautiful lady, and lives in the South. She loves Alex much."

"Alex Grant love pale-face lady, too?" There was the faintest tremor in the low voice.

"Yes, very much. They will marry soon."

"Alex Grant not love Tallasse?"

"Yes, as a sweet and gentle sister."

"Oh!" For a moment the dark head was bowed on Alice's shoulder. The struggle was keen but short. Then raising her beautiful face, upon which was an expression of hopeless submission, she said gently: "Tallasse no longer child. Tallasse be sister to Alex Grant. Tallasse so glad Sister Alice speak."

The maiden had waged love's first battle and conquered. Henceforth she was to look upon her deliverer with the love of a faithful sister only.

Half an hour later Mr. Wheeler came flying up the driveway, and springing from his carriage bounded up the steps like a school-boy.

"Why, William," laughed his wife as he rushed through the hallway and into the sitting-room. "I have not seen you so excited for years. I fear you are becoming nervous."

"Who wouldn't be excited over such news?" he answered. "Where is the telegram? I sha'n't believe your story until I read it for myself."

"Then read," she laughed, handing him the dispatch.

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Eagerly he took it, and a gratified sigh escaped his lips as he laid it upon the table.

"That means a wedding, I suppose," he said, turning to Alice.

"Wait till he gets here, father; John may have changed his mind," was the bantering response.

"He sends his love, just the same."

"Perhaps Alex added that to keep my courage up. It is just like him." But her dancing eyes told quite a different story.

It was early evening when Mr. Wheeler drove back from the depot and put down the travellers before the house door. They were dressed exactly alike and both were cleanly shaven. As they entered the house arm in arm, it was puzzling to distinguish them, but as they turned into the reception room a certain young woman's intuition quickly detected her lover, and the next minute Alice Wheeler was laughing and sobbing in John's arms.

Leaving the united couple to themselves, Alex started towards the sitting-room but was met on the way by Mrs. Wheeler, who carried out her threat of hugging him, adding a motherly kiss to balance her account.

"You noble boy," she said tearfully, "you have made us all so happy and thankful."

"Tallasse glad too," said a sweet voice, and turning Alex found himself face to face with his protegee of the

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Indian village. It was the first intelligence he had received of her arrival, and he was much pleased to know that she had accepted his offer and followed his instructions. The change in her appearance was at first bewildering to him; he could scarcely believe so radical a transformation could be effected in so short a time. Her girlish beauty enchanted him and as he gazed at her in open-mouthed astonishment, she trembled slightly. Then as he held out his hand, she sprang towards him like a delighted child, threw herself into his arms and put up her lips to be kissed.

"You dear child," he said tenderly. "I am so glad you arrived safely. I am your brother now and shall never let you return to the wigwam again."

"Tallasse love her nice brother. Him so good to give Tallasse nice home, nice mother, nice father, nice sister; all so kind to Tallasse," and throwing her arms about his neck, she burst into tears. The scene was most affecting, and as Mrs. Wheeler looked on, the tears freely coursed down her cheeks. When the girl had become somewhat calmer Alex held her at arms' length and smilingly gazed into the beautiful, tear-wet face.

"Shall I take you to my mother?" he asked.

She looked at Mrs. Wheeler questioningly.

"You shall not, Alex," promptly replied the adopted mother. "Tallasse is ours. You sent her to us, and we shall keep her. Besides, we have a prior claim.

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She is my sister's child."

Then as Mrs. Wheeler explained to him the circumstances connected with the girl's birth, there were tears in the young man's eyes.

"Truly the hand of God was in her coming here," he said earnestly. "I can now understand why I was willing to face even death for the sake of her deliverance."

Then placing Tallasse's hands in those of her adopted parent, Alex continued, "She is yours, Mrs. Wheeler. I have not the heart to take her from you, even were she willing. May she prove a blessing to you, as I know you will be a true mother to her," and with heart nearly bursting with emotion, he turned away to be grasped by Alice, who, with John, had approached unnoticed.

"You darling boy," she exclaimed, shaking him by the shoulders. "I shall never live long enough to properly thank you for bringing back my John."

"Don't try, Alice. I have simply carried out my contract with Uncle Robert, who by this time is nearly as happy as we are over the dispatch I sent him. But you must not forget to thank Duffy, without whom I might not have succeeded. That bushwhacker is an angel in disguise."

"Why, there he is now, Alex; I just heard one of the barn men calling to him. Mother won't let John go for half an hour yet, so let's go after him. Come on."

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Turning and catching the dark, wistful eyes of the Indian girl upon them, Alice tucked her hand under her arm and said gaily, "Come, Tallasse,—come out and see the man who brought Alex to your village." Not waiting for a further invitation, she fairly flew to the piazza, dragging the other two with her, and greeted Duffy and Mr. Wheeler, who were just returning from the stable. Her hearty welcome was repeated by not only Alice but all the household, who fully appreciated the important part the faithful woodsman had played in the expedition.

It was a very late hour when the family and the wanderers separated for the night. Over and over again Duffy was requested to relate the experiences of himself and Alex, which he did in a most effective manner. A more attentive company never listened to a narrator, which attitude put Dennis in his glory. Not a detail of the journey did he leave out, but drew on the tale into such magnitude and harrowing experiences, that his listeners thrilled with horror and glowed with admiration as their eyes rested on their heroes. Tallasse was deeply affected over the death of her father, but the comforting hand of Mrs. Wheeler soon restored her to cheerfulness.

Alice was supremely happy, now that her lover was returned, and as for John, he beamed on the company as if nothing further in life was asked for by him. He looked on "the sweetest girl in the world" sitting

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beside him and felt his cup of happiness was full.

The next morning Alex was missing. He had stolen quietly away in the early dawn, and though nothing definite was known, the impression prevailed that he had taken the first train bound towards the South, to keep his pledge with the girl he, too, had "left behind him."

CHAPTER XXIII

A WELCOME MESSAGE.—THE GRANT SPECIAL

ROBERT GRANT sat in deep meditation. There was a worried furrow upon his brow, and the white hand trembled slightly as he passed it frequently through his hair. He had aged perceptibly during the past few months; in appearance he was ten years older. The face was more wrinkled, the form less active. Without doubt the sorrow occasioned by his son's continued absence was bearing him step by step to the grave. His great business continued as of old, but the superintendency had been placed in other hands. He could not centre his mind upon matters of finance; his burden was of John. His heart-cry was for the companionship of his son—the heir to his immense fortune. During the four years not a word had been heard from the absent one; and now he was ready to give up in despair. Business associates and friends remarked upon the physical change in the lumber king, but none outside his brother's family were in his confidence. He was continually on the alert for news from his nephew, who he felt was straining every effort to locate the lost cousin. Mr. Wheeler's letter had to an extent increased his hope, but the fitful, anxious feeling returned within

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a week, when he seemed to sink into deeper grief than ever. For the past two weeks no letter had been received from Alex, and not knowing the circumstances, he failed to understand his nephew's silence.

In a moment of despair he had sent for his brother, fully decided to prepare his last will and testament, making Alex his principal heir. But the attorney-general had advised a further delay of two months, hoping that his energetic son would finally strike the trail and run down the missing cousin.

"If something does not transpire within a month I shall consider the search off and call Alex home. There is little use continuing the expense. John is deliberately keeping out of the way. His treatment of Wheeler's girl clearly shows that he wishes to keep his whereabouts hidden from me. He has assuredly thrown his old father over, preferring to take up with strangers. I can stand the strain no longer; it is sending me to the grave. I may as well insert Alex's name in my will as inheriting the bulk of my property, and rest the matter there. If John is not interested enough in what is legally his to come home, he deserves to be disinherited. I have done my utmost to find him; my conscience is clear."

"Don't lose courage, Robert. There is every prospect of the boys meeting. You gave Alex two years in which to succeed or fail, and he has yet five months to make good. Wait the limit, and then if

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you decide to act I shall not interfere. My boy would far rather see John in his proper place than inherit your fortune. I believe Alex is on the trail; something tells me you will receive good news very shortly. Only last night my wife expressed her conviction that the search was ended—that John had been found; and she could not rid herself of the feeling. Never call a cat dead until it ceases to breathe.”

“Perhaps you are right, Brother; if Mary has that impression there is reason for it. That wife of yours seldom goes astray in her convictions. I will wait the limit and hope for better results. Come in,” as a rap sounded at the door, and a messenger boy entered bearing a dispatch, which the lumberman, used to receiving at frequent intervals, opened mechanically. With a shout of joy he sprang from his chair.

“Thank God! Thank God!” For a moment he danced about the room as one insane. Then stopping before his brother he handed him the telegram. It read:

“Grand Rapids, Mich., September 25, 188—

“To ROBERT GRANT, Burlington, Vt.

“Have trailed John to his lair. Explanations most satisfactory. He will return home. Leave here for Grand Forks at once. Will write full account from there. John is well and sends love.

“ALEX GRANT.”

“Wait a moment,” said Mr. Grant to the messenger

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boy after signing for the dispatch. Then going to a large safe and selecting a ten-dollar bill he gave it to the delighted runner. "That is for yourself. The message has brought more than ten dollars' worth of joy to my heart. And if you ever want a friend, my boy, come to Robert Grant."

The poor youngster attempted to express his thanks, but, utterly failing, bolted through the door.

"Just see how much happiness you have brought to that boy's heart, Robert," commented his brother. "If you enacted such deeds more frequently you would be a much more contented man." It was not the first time the attorney-general had reproved his tight-fisted brother for his habitual lack of charity.

"John, get ready for a trans-continental trip," said the millionaire, taking no notice of the censure. "Go home and tell Mary and Ethel to make preparations for the most elaborate occasion of their lives. We will start one week from to-day. My business will be in condition by that time for an extended vacation. I'll order the palace car 'Vermont' held for my special use, and we'll hunt up a suitable boarding-car, and a sleeper. I'll also nail on to my favorite engine, the 'Vermont,' and have the whole train newly painted and varnished. Tell Mary to engage a cook, a waiter, a chamber girl, and a scrub-woman, or any one else that is needed. You look after a stock of provisions and other details. I'll select my own engineer, fireman

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and conductor, as I know the best men on the road. And you may engage the messenger boy who brought this dispatch as my errand boy.

"The train must be perfectly equipped, for we shall need to preserve all the dignity becoming my station as head official of the road, and leading financier of the state. I expect it is John's intention to marry Wheeler's girl, and we must be on hand to witness the ceremony. We'll make San Francisco our terminus, and take the bride and groom along with us."

"Do you mean it, Robert?" asked his brother.

"Every word of it, John. Now, be off. I shall begin this very moment to arrange my business for a prolonged absence;" and turning to his desk, the lumberman set himself at work in a way that meant the brother's dismissal.

The family of John Grant were, of course, individually and collectively, delighted. The more they considered the trip the more they realized the magnitude of Robert Grant's undertaking. He did nothing by halves where he was personally interested. If he had decided to show the western world the luxuries of official travelling, the expending of thousands of dollars would not stand in his way. John Grant knew this, and set about carrying out his brother's instructions on a most elaborate scale.

"It will be what Webster would explain as an 'unabridged' pleasure trip," laughed Mrs. Grant.

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"But Robert has been so depressed of late that it is better he should exhibit some such outlandish freak. It will ventilate his joy at the prospect of having John with him again."

"It is time he was getting rid of some of his surplus wealth," chirped Ethel, whose dream of a visit to the Golden State was about to be realized. "He can well afford it, and I have no scruples in appropriating such luxuries as his preparations will surely imply."

Then began the preparations, into which Mrs. Grant entered with a cheerfulness characteristic of her nature. Nor did the millionaire stop short of his declaration to make the journey one to be remembered by all. His ambition now was to make amends for all mistakes of the past; and he determined that his son would never again have occasion to question his willingness to do as he would be done by.

Nor were his considerations confined to the work of fitting out the special. Orders were also given to expert workmen to put his mansion in condition for the reception of the bride and groom.

"I like the idea of John's bringing home a wife," he confided to his brother. "The old home has been lonely since Rachel died, and it will seem like beginning life over again to have a capable young woman presiding over its affairs. William Wheeler's daughter shall have no occasion to regret her union with the son of Robert Grant."

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At an early hour on the morning set for its westward journey the handsome special steamed from the home station, bearing a happy company, the most joyous of whom was the millionaire, whose anticipated meeting with his son had already wrought a marvellous change in him.

PART THREE

CHAPTER XXIV

THE REJECTED SUITOR

"MY ANSWER is final, Count de Havre. Much as I appreciate the honor, I cannot grant your request."

"Then you absolutely refuse to become my wife, Miss Whiting?"

"I am very sorry if it is really a disappointment, and you put it that way—but that is my meaning—yes."

"You know the beautiful home that I am in a position to give you?"

"I have taken all the circumstances under careful consideration."

"But surely, you cannot have considered my very high standing in society—the very enviable position that I hold among my own people. My beautiful estates, my mansion in Paris; the several country villas; they are the envy of all the ladies of France. I would change your position in the world, my dear Miss Whiting; I would make you one of the first ladies of the land. You would have wealth; you would have influence; as the Countess de Havre, you would be a leader in society, the remark of all the elite."

"Such advantages are worthy the deepest considera-

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tion, Count de Havre; and your reference to the very exalted position which I, as your wife, would enjoy, is equalled only by your unusual liberality. But America is my home, and ever shall be. I have no ambition to leave my native country, even for the honor of a title. I love my own people. When I marry, it will be one of my own land. To marry a foreigner, even though he were a count, would make me a traitor to all that is loyal."

"Ah, perhaps you have a lover; an American whom you adore? But he can never hold the title or mingle with a people equal to the Count de Havre. I make the offer of marriage,—I willingly bestow upon you my noble name because I love you so much. I would take you from your inferior surroundings, and make you the centre of luxuries the like you can never imagine until you behold them. There your rare beauty would shine as the pearl of pearls; here it will remain hidden forever. Your American lover has not the wealth, has not the name, has not the standing of the head of the house de Havre. My offer of marriage is a very great honor, Miss Whiting; an honor the American lady delights to receive. Think well before you pass by the one chance of your life. I have very many opportunities to wed rich ladies of your country, but I seek not wealth. Your beauty attracts me. I would be proud to establish you as the queen of my extensive possessions, to make you the envy of my associates."

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Miss Whiting marvelled at the exhibition of audacity and egotism.

"You are the essence of generosity, Count de Havre; but I must insist that my answer is final. I do not love you. And while I sincerely appreciate your offer of marriage, I beg that you will not again refer to it. A closer relation than that of friend is quite impossible between us."

"Ah, now I am very sure that you have a lover already," suavely replied the Count. "A handsome American, to be sure, but not to be compared to the Count de Havre."

"It is quite unnecessary to discuss the merits or demerits of one who is a stranger to you," answered Miss Whiting coldly.

"If I may allude to an episode of a few months past,—you met him in California, did you not, Miss Whiting? I seem to remember reading in the papers of a scene in the St. Nicholas Hotel, at San Francisco, when your very pure character was brought into question," he said, ignoring the lady's attempt to dismiss the subject. "It created a very great deal of excitement at the time, did it not?"

For a moment Miss Whiting met the insinuating look with a blush of insulted dignity mantling her beautiful face. Then she rose and turned her back on him.

"I remember now—so very well,—he was a—a—

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what you Americans call a bushwhacker, and he hailed from the woods of Vermont," continued the Count, not at all disconcerted at her apparent wish to end the interview. "A most creditable champion for so fair and persecuted a lady. And, quite natural, as we read in the very interesting novels of our day, his reward was your gratitude, to be followed with your love."

Chagrined at her refusal to consider his offer of marriage the Count's last resort was a menace upon her character. But, while surprised at his knowledge of her life, and thoroughly indignant at his ungentlemanly attitude, Miss Whiting's calmness was noticeable.

"Shall we not consider this interview at an end, Count de Havre?" she asked in an even voice, moving towards the door opening into the hallway. "Such an uncalled-for affront is extremely painful to me; and I must request that further visits to my home be discontinued."

"I ask you to reconsider, Miss Whiting," he said in an altered tone, realizing that he had spoken hastily. "I will call again two weeks from to-day for your final answer, at which time a favorable reply will be very much to your advantage." Before she could further remonstrate he had left the house and a moment later she saw him walking down the driveway towards the street.

"God help me," she half sobbed, leaving the drawing-room and ascending to her chamber. "Oh, Alex,

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why do you not write? If you only knew——”

Throwing herself upon a sofa, she buried her face in the pillows and wept as though her heart would break.

Several months had passed since the parting at San Francisco. She had expected to hear from her young friend of the Pacific Coast, thinking the earnest invitation to visit her would be considered as a privilege for them to correspond. But though she had hopefully looked forward to a letter, none had ever come. Had Alex Grant met with reverses? Was he a victim of the terrible northern wilds? She had witnessed the attempt upon his life at the San Francisco station, but his telegram, still jealously treasured, had assured her that no harm had befallen him there.

With the arrival of each mail her disappointment was repeated. She did not for a moment doubt his loyalty to their friendship. That his promise to visit her home would be fulfilled she was fully persuaded. But the waiting, the suspense, knowing the many dangers he must encounter, were truly heart-breaking. That her future happiness was fully in his keeping,—that her love went out to him at their parting in the West, she had already admitted to her father and brother, who sympathized with her in the months of weary waiting.

“Alex is a man among a thousand,” she had confided to Frederick, “and I shall wait his coming, though

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I do not hear from him."

In the meantime there had come into her life a suitor,—a French count. Aside from possessing apparently indisputable credentials of rank, and evidence of unlimited wealth, he was a young man of handsome appearance, suave manners, and in every way, as decided by the higher social class, a most desirable alliance.

He was retiring in manner at first, difficult of acquaintance, and loth to accept the pleasures of offered entertainment. But gradually he had accepted the endless flow of invitations and finally allowed himself the full swing the lionized foreigner enjoys in America.

While not announcing himself a gentleman of title, it had become known that his standing in French society was of the very highest; that he was touring America for the purpose of perfecting an insufficient knowledge of the country before taking a wife and settling permanently upon his vast estates. He was much pleased with the Alabama capital, with its delightfully cordial people; and after much persuasion, had resolved to remain through the social season, when, he said, he must return immediately to his own country.

Opportunities in view of matrimonial alliances were showered upon him, but he refrained from making haste to accept. The eligible beauties were so many and worthy, their attractions so dazzling, that he must

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take time to observe them before he considered his final choice.

Society raved over him. The announcement that the governor was giving a reception in his honor created a furore, for the ladies all thought that then, when all the beauty of the city was arrayed before him in its best, he surely would select from the lovely company a bride. It was there he saw Miss Whiting, and from the hour of their meeting his decision was known, for his praises of her were endless and his attentions most pronounced. Then began the calls at the Whiting house, which were noticeable for frequency and their lack of formality. In public, he was continually at her side. His manner was gallant and she was looked upon by society in general as being a decidedly fortunate woman.

But Marion had no love to give this scion of France. While outwardly showing deep appreciation of the compliment he paid her, a suspicion rankled in her mind that all this representation of rank and wealth was in error. Her intuition was deep and she made all her decisions in accordance with it. The Californian episode had not been without its lesson, either.

"I do not love him, Father," she replied to his questionings. "There is something about the man which is repellent, almost revolting to me. His attentions seemed clothed in a double meaning."

"But is it wise to allow a continuance of his visits?"

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asked Mr. Whiting. "I am not favorably impressed with him; still I would advise that fairness of spirit be shown him. State your position to him and request that his marked attentions cease. If he is the gentleman he would have us believe, he will immediately withdraw. If there is a hidden purpose behind his courtesies we had best know it at once, my dear."

"But he will give me no opportunity to speak, Father. I have thought that he guesses my true feelings towards him and wishes to ward off the issue, thus gaining time to shape his plans towards effecting a change in my attitude."

Then had come the avowal, with all its promised honors. In his passion he had revealed but a portion of his treacherous nature—a nature which was capable of the most contemptible act—but Miss Whiting had read his purpose instantly.

"It is a repetition of the San Francisco affair—just an attempt to extort money," she confided to her father and brother that evening. "I am now confident that he is in league with DeLaurie and that, before this thing is ended, we shall be forced to deal with both men."

Mr. Whiting set his jaw firmly. "His persistence must be blocked. When he calls again, send for Frederick or me; or better still, we will both be at hand. In the meanwhile I will retain private detectives to hunt him up and shadow him. Be calm, my dear, and say nothing to him. He cannot injure your

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character at all. I wish young Grant were here," he added suddenly, "he would make quick work of your 'count.' That fellow is a natural scout, Marion."

"Do you really like Alex, Father?" she asked, a little blush of pleasure coming to her face. For answer, he drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to her. "I had summed up your acquaintance with the young man, and seen its probable outcome, so took the liberty to write to the editor of the *Burlington Free Press*. You remember you told me he was a staff writer of that paper. There is my answer."

Wonderingly Marion took the envelope and opening the enclosure read aloud,

"Editorial Department of
Burlington Free Press

"September 3, 188—.

"RICHARD WHITING, Esq., Montgomery, Ala.

"My dear Sir: Your letter at hand in regard to Alex Grant. Recommendation is unnecessary. His life, as fully known to us from childhood, is above reproach. Is the only son of Attorney-General John Grant; honored with a highly respected mother, a beautiful sister, and will in all probability inherit from one to two hundred thousand dollars from his father and uncle. Has been for five years and is still a trusted attache of this paper. Is at present in the Northwest searching for his cousin. You are safe in giving him unlimited confidence. What he appears to be, so he is.

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In conclusion: If you are father to Miss Whiting of a certain California incident, kindly convey to her my sincere congratulations upon the honor of her associations with so worthy a young man. Any further information concerning my esteemed colleague will be cheerfully furnished.

“Yours very sincerely,

“GEORGE BENNETT, Managing Ed.”

“May I keep the letter, Father?” she asked, her face glowing with pride. “It is very precious to me.”

“You are welcome to it, my dear. My opinion of young Grant was of the best, but I wanted to be sure.”

“I am so glad to know that no evil has befallen him. Oh, Father, if Alex only knew of this, even the finding of his cousin would be of secondary consideration.”

“It is better that he remain ignorant for the present. He is employed by his uncle, and must finish the work in hand before taking up the cause of another.”

But although they dreaded much, little did they know of the depth to which the French schemer was sinking his plot against Marion.

CHAPTER XXV

ARRIVAL OF ALEX GRANT.—DEATH OF MISS WHITING

TWO WEEKS had passed. The settled hour for Count de Havre's final visit to the Whiting home was near at hand. The family anticipated and were prepared for a scene. But in view of certain revelations, the developments of a systematic secret work during the interval, it was conjectured that further movements of the foreigner could be readily checked. That his claim to a title was groundless, and assumed for fraudulent purposes, had been proven beyond question. His appearance in Montgomery had been the initial step of a well-planned plot to create a scandal in connection with the California episode, unless hedged by a heavy bribe. His apparent devotion and avowal of love were but a part of the scheme. If repulsed, he was prepared to make specific charges, and demand a quietus. It had been learned that an ally had arrived from the West within two days, and finally, as the result of an expert detective's untiring efforts, it had been discovered that the professed Count de Havre was none other than a professional blackmailer of a most dangerous type.

Mr. Whiting, fearing for his daughter's safety,

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requested the privilege of dealing with the culprit after a manner of his own. But wishing to assume all responsibility, Marion preferred to meet him personally.

At the hour of eight a ring at the door announced the Count, and a moment later he was ushered into the drawing-room. He was dressed in the height of fashion. A diamond flashed from his spotless linen, a red rose, fresh from the conservatory, decorated his coat. He was in the best of humor, an expression of confidence adding to his general bearing of good-nature.

"You have, I doubt not, decided upon an answer to my question, my dear Miss Whiting?" he asked in a softened tone, after a few pleasantries had been exchanged.

"Quite decided, Count de Havre," with a winning smile.

"Ah, I observe that the answer is a most agreeable one for me," he responded, with a remarkable imitation of Parisian rapture. "My life is so very much bound up in a favorable reply, my dear Miss Whiting. You cannot know with what very great hopefulness have I been looking forward to this evening. My very happy, or my very miserable future existence depends most entirely upon your answer to my urgently expressed desire; as will also the change be very great in your present and future social position in this and your adopted country."

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"Which is truly a most pleasing prospect, Count de Havre."

"Yet it is but a very small part of that which I am able to do for you, my dear lady."

"And you repeat that your love for me is disinterested, Count de Havre?"

"It is such a pleasure for me to repeat how very much I do love you, my dear Miss Marion. As I have said, my future life, its happiness or misery, depends most entirely upon you."

"And I am the sole possessor of your heart?"

"The only one, my love. No woman upon this wide, wide earth is so beautiful, so pure, so good. I adore you. You are more than life to me. I cannot live without you. Ask me what it shall be to prove my great love, and I shall do it without so much as a question."

"I appreciate your expressions of loyalty, my dear Count. France is a delightful country. Its people are interesting. Paris has ever been the goal of my ambition."

"La belle France! Magnificent Paris! Yet, with all their rapturous glories, their vast privileges, they cannot compare to the wonderful beauty I see in my darling's eyes. Nor can they give the very great, the very inexpressible joy I feel in the hope of taking her as my bride to the vast estates that await her coming. Far, very far above all beauty, above all purity, above all

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goodness that I can name, are the most admirable qualities of my darling's life."

So ecstatical had he become, so apparently lost to all but his victim's confidential bearing, that he failed to observe the flush of loathing which had come over Miss Whiting's face.

"Then, Count de Havre, why have you sought to wreck my name, if, as you say, I am so dear to your heart? Why have you come to me under a guise of love, yet prepared, if rejected, to demand a price for your silence?" She had now risen and stood facing him, composed, erect, and her eyes meeting his in a steady, fearless gaze. "My answer is the same. Under no conditions can I become your wife. My decision is final, and I insist that you cease to visit me or my home."

He looked deliberately into her face, the shadow of a sneer upon his lips. He had been prepared for this, and was ready to act.

"May I ask if the very beautiful Miss Whiting has had her hounds upon the trail?"

"I have authorized no movement against you, but information has been gathered without my solicitation. The evidence is sufficient to thwart your purpose, and brand you a villain," she answered quietly.

"Is my lady prepared to face the results of a great scandal—equal, perhaps, to a very interesting transpiration among strangers of the Pacific Coast?"

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"May I inquire its nature?"

"In regard to your very 'pure character,' " with a meaning smile.

"If my character is shaded with unholiness, then why have you twice sought my consent to become your wife?"

"To save you from a very great disgrace. I would shield you from the storm that is upon you, and I would bestow upon you my very honorable name." There was a tinge of sarcasm in his voice.

"So magnanimous an act is quite unnecessary, Count de Havre. There is no cause to seek even so unsubstantial a shelter. Were you the gentleman you would have me believe, so grave a reference to my name would not pass your lips."

"But I have proof of your questionable,—I may say your double life,—my dear lady."

"And yet I have been given unqualified assurance of your confidence in my integrity."

He smiled.

"And I am able at once to produce a very positive witness to your evil doings."

"May I hear his testimony?" Her voice was low and her features immovable.

"It shall be so." A movement of the hand, and a figure entered through the low, swinging window.

Miss Whiting turned her head with a start.

"May I ask you if the face of this very beautiful

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lady is familiar to you?" was asked of the new-comer.

"It is very familiar indeed."

"And where you may have seen it?"

"In de ceety of San Francisco."

"She was there on a visit?"

"On a veeset, I should say."

"And she was alone?"

"She had for a companion one very handsome young gentlemen."

"Ah. Mon Dieu, it must not be as bad as that. And his name?"

"Alex Grant."

"You are very sure?" in apparent incredulity.
"This is a very grave charge to make against so excellent a lady."

"I am very sure. I cannot mistake de lady. I meet both in de St. Nicholas Hotel."

"And their relations were quite proper?"

"As man and wife."

"Liar!" A figure shot through the window and again DeLaurie lay at the feet of Alex Grant from a well-directed blow. Then grasping the astonished Count, he flung him bodily through the window. A glad cry of "Alex, Alex," came from the girl's lips as she sprang into his outstretched arms and raised her lips to his.

A flash, a report, a scream, and Marion Whiting sank upon her lover's breast, the life-blood trickling

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from a wound in her own. The bullet aimed at him had missed its mark and pierced the darling of his heart.

A second report, a third, rang out, and DeLaurie, whose weapon was raised towards Grant, fell to the floor with two bullet wounds in his heart, while a few feet away stood Frederick Whiting, his face deathly pale, and a smoking revolver in his hand.

"Marion, Marion," said Alex softly, looking into the beloved face. "Marion, Marion,—speak to me," he cried brokenly, his face blanched.

An instant the beautiful eyes opened and met his, as the girl murmured: "Good-bye—darling. Meet—your—Marion—in heav—," but the spirit of the girl had fled to meet the mother who had gone before.

Gently he laid the beautiful form upon a sofa, beseeching her to speak, but there was no voice to answer. He knelt beside her, as one dazed, aroused only by a thud and a smothered cry of "My God, my God!" as Richard Whiting fell to the floor. Words cannot picture the depth of their agony. Brother and lover were alike inconsolable as they labored to restore the unconscious father. His heart, naturally weak, refused to respond to their tireless energies, and before the doctor arrived, the father lay dead beside his daughter.

Three days later Frederick Whiting and Alex Grant followed the loved forms to the family vault, where, with bowed heads and aching hearts, they listened to

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the final rites. With their friendship deepened by this mutual bond of grief, Alex and Frederick returned to the lonely home.

"Fred, old man, you must get away from here," said Grant a week later. "I will be laying you away within a month if you remain in this desolate home. You must think of yourself now, for our dear ones are beyond the reach of dark brooding; there is nothing further we can do for them. DeLaurie is dead and buried in the potter's grave and the other fake count is behind the bars, where he is likely to remain for the rest of his life. Come North with me, Fred; it will do you good." So together they turned their faces towards the Dakotas, where change of scenes and warm friendships went in a measure towards healing the hearts made sad by the double tragedy.

CHAPTER XXVI

"HIM NOT KILL MY ALEX GRANT"

"POOR BOY! May God help him bear his terrible sorrow," said kind-hearted Mrs. Wheeler, as she listened to an account of Miss Whiting's death, as related in a letter from Alex to John, which the latter was reading to the family in the sitting-room, a week following Alex's sudden departure for the South. Alice was in tears, while Mr. Wheeler winked hard to hide his emotion.

Beside Mrs. Wheeler, her hand resting upon her chair, stood beautiful Tallasse, now known as Letitia, by the adopted mother, in memory of the dead. With increasing excitement she had listened to the contents of Alex's letter, fairly holding her breath at times as she seemed to realize the absent one's danger. Then, as John read that portion telling of DeLaurie's awful deed, Marion's last words and her death, the girl could no longer control her feelings.

"Him not kill Alex Grant?" and an expression of unspeakable joy came to her face.

"No, darling, Alex is safe, and will be with us in a few days," said Mrs. Wheeler gently.

"Tallasse so glad," she breathed more easily.

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"I am glad that young Whiting settled the villain so quickly," said Mr. Wheeler. "It is lucky for Alex that he was at hand. That boy seems to have a charmed life. When I think of the Indian attack at Round Lake, where it was forty to two, I wonder he and Duffy are alive to-day."

"It is the protection of a loving God," murmured Mrs. Wheeler, gently. "His purposes must always be taken into account, dear. He has gathered Marion to a better home, while Alex is left to complete his work on earth."

"And yet Marion was so young and beautiful," suggested Alice. "And Alex loved her so."

"Yes—but we shall all live to understand this sorrow, which is now so terrible. Once I could not understand God's great goodness to me in providing a loving husband and unlimited comforts, while Sister Letitia was suffering untold deprivations in a wigwam. But see what He has sent to our home," and encircling the young girl's waist with a loving arm she pressed Letitia closer to her.

Alice looked at her mother and understood, a happy smile coming to her lips.

"Mother's argument always wins right of way," said Mr. Wheeler, rising and going to his wife. "If God gave her a loving husband, the prairies, at least, under His direction, gave me a loving companion," and bending, he kissed her tenderly.

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"John, there is an example for your old age," laughed Alice, glancing mischievously at her betrothed.

A week later, when riding near the railroad depot, Alice drew John's attention to an engine and three handsome cars which had just been side-tracked.

"I know that dear old car 'Vermont,' " he answered, reining in the horses. "I have ridden in it many times. The Central Vermont officials always use it when going on a trip—and the same engine, too." Then, with eyes shining brightly, he turned to his companion: "My father is within. He has come to take us home, dear. Your father wrote him of our intended marriage, and he has taken this way of showing his good-will. I wonder who is with him."

They were now within plain view of the special. At that moment a uniformed attache appeared upon the front platform, and glancing towards the carriage and its occupants, excitedly waved his hand, sprang to the ground, and ran rapidly towards them.

It was Jimmy Barnes, the telegraph messenger, and a former protege of the millionaire's son.

"Hello, John," he shouted heartily. "I'm awful glad to see you."

"What are you doing here, Jimmy?" and handing the reins to Alice, John sprang from the carriage. "Aren't you some distance from home?" giving the boy a vigorous shake.

"No farther than you are," grasping his old friend

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and giving him a bruin-like hug. "Gosh, I'm awful glad to see you, John."

"Who are in the special, Jim?"

"Your father and Uncle John, Aunt Mary, Cousin Ethel, and a whole gang of attendants. We have a regular boarding-house car; eat, sleep and travel in them cars. It's been a great trip, John."

"But what is the purpose?"

"Don't you know?" and the boy laughed knowingly. "We came after you. Mr. Grant said he'd be in time for that wedding if the engine busted. He began preparations as soon as he received Alex's telegram, and here we are."

Then a glad cry came from the car, and a bright, sunburned young lady bounded down the car steps and hastened across the tracks.

"John Grant, I am ashamed of you," she exclaimed laughingly, taking both his hands. Then rising on her tip-toes, she kissed him affectionately. "Why have you stayed away so long?" and she looked earnestly into his face, so much like her darling brother's.

"I wanted to learn bushwhacking before settling down for life in the old home," he laughed.

Then going to Alice, who had alighted shyly from the carriage while Jimmy held the horses, she held out her hands without waiting for an introduction.

"And you are Alice Wheeler? I was so pleased with the picture you sent to Uncle Robert Grant. But

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it did not fully satisfy me. I wanted to meet the original. Photographs, you know, are so like fish stories, dressed for the occasion! But in this case the camera by no means flattered its subject," and she kissed the pretty stranger affectionately. "You must come over to our car and meet my mother," leading the way across to where the train stood.

As they entered, Robert Grant rose to greet them, trembling visibly. Going at once to John, he placed both hands upon his shoulders, and looked longingly into the face so like his mother's, unable for the moment to speak.

"My boy, my boy," he said finally in a broken voice.

"Father, forgive me," and tears came to the son's eyes as he realized how great a change his prolonged absence had wrought.

"We will not speak of forgiveness upon either side, my boy," replied the father happily. "We will let the future work that out gradually, lest we humble ourselves more than is needed," clinging to his old-time pride, yet anxious to show his good-will.

"And so this is my daughter—that is to be. Welcome to the Grant family. If you could but know how much I have needed you and John." Then, as he drew her to him and kissed the sweet lips, Alice knew that she had already won his heart.

The meeting with Ethel's father and mother was most cordial, Mrs. Grant's motherly heart going out

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to the young girl instantly.

At Alice's request the travellers prepared for a transfer to the Wheeler home, the comforts of which they were an hour later enjoying to their hearts' content.

As intended by the now jubilant millionaire, the surprise had been complete.

"I was determined to see the knot tied," he said to Mr. Wheeler, as the enlarged family sat around the supper table. "And I wanted to make sure of their return to John's home."

Two days later Alex and Frederick Whiting arrived from the South, nominally recovered from their experience with death, yet showing the effects of an agony naturally following the loss of their dear ones. But the comfort of a loving mother and sister had its sway, and soon Alex was in his usual cheery state of mind.

"I am so sorry for you, Mr. Whiting,—for you and for my brother," said Ethel, placing her hands in those of the Southerner. "But you must look upon the affliction as for the best, and remember that you are with friends who feel for you."

"I should be heartless, indeed, to feel otherwise, Miss Grant," he answered softly. "From Alex's description of his sister I knew that I should have a friend in you."

"My brother's friend is *my* friend," said Ethel simply, the honest blue eyes meeting the brown.

From that moment Frederick Whiting's heart was

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in Ethel Grant's keeping. Nor was the pretty Easterner's own estimation of her brother's handsome friend other than of the highest.

"But where is Tallasse?" asked Alex of Alice when the greetings and expressions of sympathy were over. Then he caught sight of a shrinking form in the background, and a pair of dark eyes fairly beamed with love as she came towards him.

"My good brother," she murmured, looking up into his face. "Tallasse so glad bad man hurt him not."

"Heaven bless her," he said, half to himself. "And Tallasse would have been sorry, had her good brother been killed?"

For an instant their eyes met, and Alex knew that the great love of this beautiful child was all his own. To her he was a being to be worshipped.

"Tallasse pray much that her brother be not harmed. Him come back safe," and an expression of satisfaction passed over her face, as she nestled close to him. To feel that her humble petitions had in a measure preserved his life was joy to the throbbing little heart.

The following week Robert Grant's special left for the Pacific Coast, taking as guests the happy bride and groom, Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler and Letitia, while Alex and Frederick, not caring to visit scenes which could but bring feelings of loneliness, took a train for the East, the one to resume the duties laid aside for a mission of love, the other to try and win the love of

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**what, to him, was the most beautiful woman on earth
—the affectionate sister of his closest friend.**

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CHAPTER XXVII

"HE LOVES ME.—HE LOVES ME"

"ANOTHER letter from Alice? The dear girl. How very thoughtful she is becoming. And yet——" The beautiful red lips curved into a smile as, breaking the seal and taking from the envelope a perfumed letter, two dark eyes read carefully the contents, which ran:

"Burlington, Vt., October 3, 18—

"Darling Sister:

"But you must come. There is no way to avoid it. Every arrangement is completed and you are an important part of the whole affair. This is our fifth anniversary. Five whole years of happy married life have been the experience of John and myself. We must celebrate in the proper way; by a reunion of our dear ones. Your absence would break the circle, which calamity cannot for a moment be considered. Again, and the most interesting of all, 'somebody' has been inquiring for you and asking when you are coming East. Your presence will mean more to him than you may think. How do I know? I have tested his honesty,—his general integrity, his ability to combat sin under special temptation, and he fell from grace! Whether

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irretrievably or but for a time depends entirely upon you. My dear, he stole your latest picture from my sitting-room mantel, where I had placed it. He first asked me if he might have it and I told him 'No'! But when he left for home the picture was in his pocket, and now, encased in an exquisite frame, it occupies a place upon his desk, where he can feast his eyes continually upon it. What does this mean? It means, my dear,—he loves you! l-o-v-e-s y-o-u. I know Alex Grant! I will give you no more information at present. You will learn the rest when you come. And it is worth coming to hear, little sister. The handsomest and best man in Burlington—excepting my John—is worth travelling twice the distance to see—in fact, worth travelling the world over, simply to meet! Ethel, Frederick and Baby Marion are to be with us. Just think how happy they will be and how happy you will be, if you but obey my injunction. Mother and Father will come with you, I am sure; their coming depends upon you. So you see, dear, how great will be the failure of my plans, if you refuse to do your duty—to me. I shall expect you before November sixth. Your loving sister,

“ALICE GRANT.”

The reader lifted her glorious eyes and smiled before her. The dark, glowing face, snapping black eyes and raven hair all spoke of the child of the woods—Tallasse, of the Indian village—Tallasse, the nymph

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of the forest. Truly a superb maiden she was, in her easy, natural grace; the quaint poise of her lovely head, the flush upon the rounded cheek and the happy smile that always wreathed her lips spoke clearly of the actual and spiritual grace of the girl. She folded her letter and placing it back in the envelope, rose and with a lithe, majestic, swaying motion left the room.

"It shall be as you say, Mother dear," she said upon entering the sitting-room and handing the letter to Mrs. Wheeler. "Alice is determined that we shall be present; so you and Father settle the matter for me."

Without replying Mrs. Wheeler read the daughter's letter to the end, then glancing up into the girl's glowing face, as she sat on the flat arm of her chair, "And does my little girl wish to go?" she asked smiling back at her.

"My wish is subject to your decision, Mother," replied the pretty lips, but there was a hidden appeal in the dark eyes which only a mother's heart can understand.

"Tell me truly, Letitia, child,—do you love Alex?"

"How can I truly say, Mother, but that I do," she answered quaintly. "All that I am is due to his tenderness of heart."

"That is gratitude, darling. Don't mistake it; but what does your heart of hearts say?"

"I have loved Alex Grant from the hour he committed me to your keeping. I loved him in his grief. I love him now with all the strength of my being. To

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me Alex Grant is a king among men. I can never be happy without him."

"We will go, my child. Your father has arranged for a two months' absence. Yet we have understood your hesitancy, and awaited your decision."

"Thank you, oh, so much, darling Mother," and she kissed the smiling lips. "You may write Alice, telling her when to expect us," and with a light, joyous step, as her eyes filled with a new hope, the beloved adopted daughter tripped from the room, bounding up the stairs with a song upon her lips.

Five years had wrought marvels in the little princess of the wigwam. With every advantage which love and wealth could provide, her mental and physical development had been marvellous. Now, at the age of twenty-three, with a finished education and of rare beauty, Tallasse had justly superseded pretty Alice Wheeler as the belle of the Dakotas.

"He loves me! He loves me! He has asked when I am coming East. My picture, encased in a beautiful frame, rests upon his desk, where his eyes may feast upon it as often as he wishes!" How precious were the thoughts inspired by Alice's letter. Again she took it from its covering, reading it carefully through and through.

After five years of silence—a period during which her studies had been unremitting, that for his sake she might overcome the handicap of early ignorance,—

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Alice Grant's message had come as a blessing from heaven.

She still felt his warm lips pressed to hers, the strong arms about her waist, as they met for the first time in the Wheeler home—when he had offered to take her to his mother, and promised she should never return to the wigwam. "I am your brother now," he had said, and then he had gone away to his southern sweetheart, returning all but prostrated with grief—a grief that had partaken of her own deep nature because it had stricken his.

Again he had left her with the promise that they should meet again—a promise that had ever remained fresh in her memory. But not one word had she received from him.

And now comes the assurance from Sister Alice: "He loves you." Joyous heart. How it beats with rapture at the thought of again pressing his hand, of looking into his dear eyes and reading for herself the love for which she has so long craved.

And now she kneels by her chair and prays—prays not to the Great Moon as of yore, but to the God of heaven and earth—that their meeting may prove a blessing to both.

"He loves me. He loves me." During all the arrangements for that eventful journey did the echoing words swell her heart with a glorious happiness—a happiness so long hoped for, but now surely hers.

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The deep, loving nature, a heritage by birth—an affection which death alone could sever—was about to be satisfied. He whose presence she had so longed for was awaiting her coming. His love—all his love, was to be hers.

“Dear Alex,” she murmured in a moment of meditation. “How he has suffered. To me he was a brother before the terrible deed that took her from him. I was sorry because of his affliction. Now—now——” She covered the blushing face with her hands lest the very walls should witness her ecstatic emotion. “I love him. I love him. O God, make me worthy of the great love that is to be mine.”

With the knowledge that the going East was to create a second vacancy in the old home, Mrs. Wheeler completed the arrangements for their departure. Yet, dearly as she loved the beautiful girl, the offspring of her own darling sister, Letitia’s happiness was more to her than all else. And who had a claim upon her love prior to the noble heart through whose instrumentality the sister’s fate had been revealed, and the daughter placed in a home where she could be equipped to take her place at his side—to grace his position in life? She was thankful for all that had been accomplished in so short a time,—for the ready response on the student’s part. And now, though the thought of parting with the girl grieved the good woman as only the going out of a loved one could, her heart was content in the

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knowledge that her duty had been faithfully performed—that nothing had been left undone which tended to fit her charge for meeting the responsibilities so soon to be assumed.

Three weeks later Letitia Wheeler and her foster-parents were speeding towards the eastern city, the older hearts eagerly anticipant of the meeting with daughter and bright grandson; the maiden heart looking forward to an experience even more rapturous, while the words continued to sound in her ears:

“He loves me. He loves me.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

LITTLE MARION WHITING

A CLATTER of little feet sounds in the outer room. The managing editor's door is pushed open, and a beautiful child enters.

"Unte Alex? Unte Alex?" and two great brown eyes look questioningly up into his face.

With a smile the editor turns his screw-chair, reaches out his arms, and the child unhesitatingly runs to them.

"And who may you be, little one?" he asks, lifting her to his knee, an arm the while encircling her waist.

"Marion."

"Marion who?" and a tender light comes to his handsome face.

"Not 'Marion Who.' My name is Marion Whiting. You my Unte Alex Grant. Mamma say so."

A happy laugh sounds from without, the door is more vigorously pushed open, and a pretty-faced, mischievous-eyed young woman rushes in. An instant later Alex Grant is submitting to the caresses of his energetic sister, while her husband, Frederick Whiting, laughingly awaits his opportunity to greet the genial brother-in-law.

"We stopped here on our way from the train,"

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explained Ethel. "We came ahead of time so as to surprise your lordship. What do you think of our Marion?" and the laughing mother, the bright Ethel of old, held out her arms to the child.

But the little one settled back in her new uncle's embrace. She was quite content with her present companion.

'Fred, do you see that? The child has lost her heart almost as quickly as I did. Verily the ways of the feminines are past finding out.'

How beautiful the brown eyes looked to him. The little nose was of the same delicate mold, the pretty mouth of a similar curve; while the hair, when attaining its natural color, would be of the same shade. Then, as he covered the sweet, childish face with his own, two plump little arms encircled his neck. When he raised his head there were tears in his eyes.

"Alex, you must cease mourning for her," and Ethel's gloved hand rested upon her brother's shoulder. "Marion would not wish it. She would have you forget the past and look to a happy future."

"Ethel is right, Brother," sustained Frederick, whose noble countenance had long since been freed from all traces of the terrible tragedy. "The memory of my sister's generous nature forbids it. Nor would she wish you to remain single for her sake."

"It was but for the moment," replied Alex, taking Frederick's hand. "This little darling's face flooded

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my mind with so many memories that I was quite overcome. I have had other thoughts."

Ethel's quick blue eyes for the second time glanced at Letitia's picture upon the desk before him, and understood. But she wisely held her counsel.

Again the rustling of skirts; the sanctum door is unceremoniously flung open, and Alice Grant, if possible prettier than ever, steps in, followed by her husband. A little scream of delight, a simultaneous rush, and the girls are locked in each other's arms.

"John saw you passing his office, and informed me over the telephone. He said you were on the way to surprise Alex, as usual. So I ordered my pony and trap in a hurry, jumped in, drove to the office, took John aboard, and here we are, almost as soon as you," she exclaimed in true western fashion. "And how is Cousin Fred?" informally extending her hand. "And this is little Marion? Oh, you darling of darlings," and impulsively snatching the child from Alex's embrace without leave or license, Alice waltzed about the room to the wonderment of the little one and amusement of her parents and uncles.

"Do you know, Ethel dear," stopping short and approaching the baby's mother, "that my Alex and this beautiful darling were born expressly for each other? He is four and she is three—just the right age. So it shall transpire twenty years hence, when we are matured and staid, that handsome Alex Grant shall

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wed beautiful Marion Whiting, in spite of terrible plots and tragedies. John Grant, behold your future daughter-in-law," and turning to her indulgent husband, she tipped the laughing child towards him to be kissed.

So sudden was the apparent inspiration that at first the others were nonplussed; but when they had taken in the full context of Alice's meaning, it was evident to all that she had but given expression to the purpose of an all-governing Providence.

"John, has your wife turned prophet?" laughingly asked Ethel, "or is this but a seance of the imagination?"

"I am inclined to think it is an inspiration, or, as you ladies would express it, 'a woman's intuition.' In either case, Alice makes no mistakes."

"As usual," put in Alex humorously. "Whether through fear or natural adoration, John Grant has never been known to oppose his wife's caprices. I fancy he has no relish for a western tornado. Between John the papa and Robert the grandpapa, Alice Grant is a spoiled woman."

"With which exhibition of true affection she enjoys the essence of contentment," and Alice bowed low. "But is it not in order for Editor Grant to invite his guests to the parental mansion in lieu of a home of his own?"

The quickly returned shot brought forth a roar of laughter, resulting a few moments later in the merry

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party leaving the publishing house for Champlain Avenue, Alice still holding the chattering Marion, while her husband handled the reins in a lively race to the ex-attorney-general's residence.

"Are you expecting friends from the West, Alice?" asked Ethel, as the two chatted in the well-remembered chamber.

"Yes. Mother, Father and Letitia will be with us two days before the anniversary. It was hard to obtain the dear child's consent to come, as she is very sensitive in regard to Alex."

"And does Alex know she is coming?"

"No, indeed. And don't you dare mention it to him. I know that Letitia loves him. And a young man who will deliberately steal a young lady's picture and keep it upon his office desk, as does your beloved brother, is not devoid of feeling."

"The poor fellow needs a companion," said Ethel compassionately, "and a more beautiful wife he cannot find. No one would dream that Indian blood flows in her veins. She reminds one so much of the Italian royalty—dark-eyed, with that lovely face and majestic bearing."

"And a heart filled to overflowing with love. Oh, Ethel, I can scarcely wait for their meeting. It means so much to them both. I have it all arranged. They will be nearly face to face before they know of each other's presence."



No one would dream that Indian blood flows in her veins

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"In private?"

"In private. She will be in my boudoir, which adjoins the rear drawing-room. I will conduct Alex to the door, usher him in, and then, in father's favorite phrase—*skip*."

"Alice, you are a blessed matchmaker," laughed Ethel. "I trust the scheme will prove fruitful."

"Oh, the match was made long, long ago," candidly answered Alice. "The completion of Letitia's education was all that remained to be fulfilled. Now that that is accomplished, I but bring them together. I have not forgotten my debt of gratitude to Alex Grant. And Letitia is the one woman in the world who can fill his life with happiness, now that Marion is dead."

"And does my mother consent to your arrangement?"

"Fully. She more than consents. She is delighted with the plan. Aunt Mary loves Letitia as a daughter, and there is no one whom she would so willingly see Alex take to his heart. But she will not come empty-handed. Father will settle one hundred thousand dollars upon her the day she is married."

"May Heaven's richest blessings rest upon their union," said Ethel fervently.

"As they have upon ours," and Alice rose to depart in answer to her husband's call.

CHAPTER XXIX

"TALLASSE, MY LOVE"

BEAMING with floods of light, the Grant mansion shone resplendent. Each window resembled a sparkling gem set in the side of the dark architecture. The driveways were lined with twinkling incandescents of various colors, while an arch over the entrance was studded with similar lights.

Throughout the spacious grounds were arc-lights, throwing their brilliant rays into the secluded nooks and crevices, making beautiful beyond description the costly statues and fountains with which the lawn was decorated.

It was the fifth wedding anniversary of John and Alice Grant. But the father, augmenting the celebration, had mingled his own joys with those of the son and daughter. Had their marriage not been the beginning of a new life to him, with all that the blessed change implied? Why, then, should he not demonstrate his own happiness as well? Had not he much to be thankful for? His friends should know it.

Again—let us this once overlook his generous pride—he was jealous for the popularity of the one who had been instrumental in effecting the change; anxious that

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her ability to entertain be looked upon as limitless; that the high social esteem be increased to adoration; and finally, that the western father and mother should behold their daughter in all her social glory. That she was easily the society magnet of this eastern city, he wanted them to know for themselves.

His trans-continental special of five years previous had been a brilliant undertaking, revealing as it did his financial importance to the western world. But this should be far and away the most elaborate of his existence. It had to do, principally, with his intimate home friends and associates; with those who knew him best. The Grants as a clan were to be present, and a few friends of influence and wealth from the South and West. In a word, it was looked upon as the event of the season—the opening of the winter's social life. Music and the sound of soft, laughing voices sounded on the night air whenever the doors of the mansion opened to admit the throng of beautifully gowned women who passed from their carriage, up over the crimson-carpeted steps, into the brilliantly lighted rooms. Carriage doors slammed and crush hats clicked, musically softened by the rustle of silken skirts and the dainty pat of satin-shod feet. Guests thronged near the foot of the grand staircase landing, greeting Alice and Ethel, who were receiving with their husbands, and then passed along to where Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler stood beside Robert Grant, who presented

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them in person. His distinguished bearing would win him instant recognition alone, but the fact that he was the king of local financiers put an additional touch of deference to his guests' manner as they bowed over the gloved fingers of his house visitors. Mrs. Wheeler smiled delightedly on everybody, wondering which member of the little receiving group was the happiest; whether the young folks drew more joy from the thoughts closing in round their anniversary, or this aristocratic father, who had bent his iron will and forgotten his former brusqueness!

Only one visitor from the receiving line was missing—Letitia Wheeler, the much-heralded belle of the West. Anticipation was rife among the ladies and gentlemen present, wondering if she would merit the great amount of homage it was said was given her. Hither and thither flitted the beautiful, gorgeously gowned leaders of fashion attended by gentlemen of leisure in their sober and immaculate evening attire. In another room, sweet voices rose in song and the merry chatter and laughter were rifted with added melody; the evening's entertainment was now in full swing.

The blue eyes of Alice Grant returned again and again to the street door and a puzzled expression rather marred the serenity of her merry face. Almost immediately it disappeared, for a handsome, familiar figure strode towards her hurriedly and Alex whispered his excuses while pressing the small fingers in his

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broad, strong hand. Instantly a hum sounded above the song, for the young man was the idol of the place and accounted the most brilliant journalist in Burlington. He was the pivot of the literary world, but so attached was he to his books and papers that it was the hardest of tasks to drag him away from them. Alice dimpled with pleasure, but shook her head at him reprovingly.

"You delinquent," she scolded, clasping both his hands, "I was afraid you had forgotten your promise to me. Father and mother are longing to greet you, so hurry along, bad boy, and then return to me instantly." Obediently he bent over the hand of his uncle, whose eyes lighted up as they rested on the handsome shoulders and face, and Mrs. Wheeler's motherly face was wreathed with pleasure as she beamed on her "boy." Father Wheeler insisted on his standing near them but catching a gleam of Alice's blue eyes and a beckoning of the small hand, he left a promise to return soon, and walked back leisurely to his fair tormentor.

With her heart beating high, she led him aside, through the sitting-room and up to her own boudoir, her eyes twinkling with anticipation as she saw the success of her well-laid plan working out so skilfully. The future happiness of the beloved foster-sister and her gifted cousin was one,—she knew, and opening the boudoir door, she drew her skirts aside for Alex to enter. His amazement growing deeper and deeper, he silently passed her and before he had time to turn round, the

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sound of the door closing caused him to look after her in astonishment. She was gone and for a moment he thought himself alone. Then his eyes rested upon a slim figure at the opposite length of the room.

Rising from the table at which she had been apparently reading, the girl turned her face to him, her bosom heaving with emotion. The red lips were parted nervously—as if she wished to speak, yet dreaded to break the stillness about them. He seemed a dream to her, that a spoken word might frighten away. Spell-bound she waited his approach, the dark eyes meeting his, glowing with tenderness, a hand resting on the table to steady her trembling limbs. Slowly, part doubtingly, Alex drew near, his intense gaze studying the exquisite face before him.

Then two arms reached out as if in appeal and a low, dear-remembered voice spoke—

“Tallasse—my love——”

A rush of feet and she was in his arms, within his embrace, her arms twining his neck as their lips met in a passionate kiss.

“Alex Grant—he come—” murmured a melodious voice, thrilling him as it dropped into the caressing croon of the forest tongue, and Letitia laid her beautiful head on his shoulder.

“My beloved,” he whispered, kissing her again and again as she thrilled with unexpressed happiness. Then drawing a little apart from him she said shyly,



Spellbound, she waited his approach

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"Shall we not go out—to the others?"

Quick to respond, he caught at the outstretched hands and together they passed out into the merry, waiting throng.

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